

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2509

February 28, 2023

The Hon. Jennifer Granholm
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm,

Recent reporting indicates that the Department of Energy (DOE) has concluded that the COVID-19 virus was the result of a lab leak. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, experts in your Department have recently memorialized this conclusion in a classified report.¹

If true, this conclusion would have far-reaching consequences. It would impact how we treat COVID-19 patients, how we investigate the role that federal agencies may have played in funding these labs, and how we hold China accountable for its role in potentially creating and covering up the novel COVID-19. This information needs to be declassified and immediately made available to the public.

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the world since its initial emergence in 2019 near Wuhan, China—home to the Wuhan Institute of Virology and other laboratories. Left-wing activists, infectious disease czar Anthony Fauci, and the Chinese government were all quick to condemn anyone who raised questions about the origins of the virus. The Washington Post and other outlets labeled this a “fringe theory.”² Many on social media platforms were censored, demonetized, or banned.³ Yet apparently, now both the FBI and DOE have embraced the lab leak theory.

DOE’s about-face comes at a critical time. The scientific journal *Nature* recently reported that the World Health Organization abandoned the second phase of its investigation into the origins of COVID-19 because the Chinese government failed to cooperate.⁴ If the United States government has new reason to believe that COVID-19 was the result of a lab leak, we must immediately pressure China to be transparent about its role in the origins of the pandemic—and hold China accountable. After everything Americans have gone through, they are entitled to answers about how COVID-19 emerged and what the United States government knows about it. I urge you to immediately declassify this report, all supporting documentation, and all records relating to the origins of COVID-19. The American people deserve the truth.

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-origin-china-lab-leak-807b7b0a>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/02/16/tom-cotton-coronavirus-conspiracy/>

³ <https://about.fb.com/news/2020/04/covid-19-misinfo-update/#removing-more-false-claims>

⁴ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00283-y>

So that Congress can consider remedial legislation, please provide the following information by March 10, 2023:

1. A complete, unredacted version of DOE's report concluding that COVID-19 likely originated in a laboratory. Please also note who, if anyone, within the department authorized the contents of this classified report to be shared with the media.
2. All agency records and communications, including with outside parties, regarding this changed assessment.
3. All records and communications raising concerns with biosecurity measures in Chinese laboratory facilities, within the past 10 years.
4. Has DOE provided any funding to Chinese or American entities for research in China? If so, what steps have been taken to ensure that the research is being conducted in a safe and secure manner?
5. Does DOE continue to collaborate with Chinese researchers? If so, does the DOE have any concerns about leaks assisted by American research? If not, when did the DOE terminate these collaborations?

If necessary to answer any of these questions, please work with my staff to schedule a briefing in a SCIF as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Hawley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "H".

Josh Hawley
United States Senator