



Minority Staff
Committee on Government Reform
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FACT SHEET

Comparison of Vice President Cheney's Energy Task Force to President Clinton's Health Care Task Force

Congressional Republicans have tried to use President Clinton's health care task force as precedent for the refusal by the White House to turn over information about the White House energy task force. For example, House Speaker Dennis Hastert has repeatedly claimed that the Vice President should not be required to release information about the energy task force because no information was released about the Clinton health care task force.¹

At the same time, Vice President Cheney has made the exact opposite argument. He has claimed that although the Clinton health care task force did release its records, that was because the Clinton task force was found to be subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The Vice President says that his energy task force is different from the Clinton task force because it is not subject to FACA. For example, the Vice President had this exchange on *Nightline* on ABC:

Cheney: [T]here was this allegation that somehow we did what the Clintons did back in '93 on health. We did not. . . . We were very sensitive to that and very careful of it. . . .

Q: Tell me where the difference is?

Cheney: [W]hen you bring in . . . outsiders and incorporate them in the policy-making process . . . then certain requirements with respect to federal advisory committees kicks in and certain requirements have to be met. We didn't do that.²

Both of these contradictory claims about the Clinton health care task force are wrong. Contrary to Speaker Hastert's claim, the Clinton White House complied with GAO information requests and turned over information about the health-care task force. And contrary to the Vice President's claim, a federal appellate court ruled that the Clinton task force was not subject to

¹Press conference with congressional leadership, FDCH Political Transcripts (Jan. 29, 2002).

²Interview with Vice President Cheney on *Nightline*, ABC (July 25, 2001).

FACA. The truth is that the Clinton White House disclosed information about the health care task force to GAO without being required to do so under FACA. This is exactly what GAO is asking the Cheney energy task force to do.

Here are the basic facts about the Clinton health care task force:

- On January 25, 1993, President Clinton established the President’s Task Force on National Health Care Reform. President Clinton named First Lady Hillary Clinton as the task force’s chairman. The other appointed members were cabinet secretaries and senior White House officials. President Clinton charged the task force with the job of “listen[ing] to all parties” and then “prepar[ing] health care reform legislation to be submitted to Congress within 100 days of our taking office.”³
- The President also formed an interdepartmental working group to support the task force by gathering information and developing various health-care options. The working group was headed by Ira Magaziner. The working group consisted of around 300 permanent federal employees drawn from the Executive Office of the President, federal agencies, and Congress; around 40 “special government employees” hired for a limited duration; and various consultants who attended some of the group meetings.
- In February 1993, Rep. William Clinger, then the ranking member on the House Government Operations Committee, asked the General Accounting Office (GAO) to investigate the task force and working group. Rep. Clinger specifically requested that GAO obtain the names of nongovernmental employees and consultants who served on the task force’s working group.
- The White House cooperated with GAO’s investigation. According to GAO, they were “provided with an extensive listing of working group participants drawn from the government and from outside organizations.”⁴ In March 1993, at the same time as they provided this information to GAO, the White House publicly released the names of the members of the task force working group.
- Separate from the GAO initiative, the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons filed a lawsuit in February 1993 alleging a violation of FACA. The suit contended that, because the First Lady was a private citizen, the task force did not consist solely of full-time government officers or employees and thus was subject to FACA’s public-access requirements. This suit was unsuccessful. On June 22, 1993, a D.C. circuit court ruled that the task force was not subject to FACA.
- In 1994, the White House released the documents created by the working group.

³29 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 96 (Feb. 1, 1993).

⁴Report from Comptroller General of the United States David M. Walker to Rep. J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, 5 (Aug. 17. 2001).