

Fauci expects Biden changes

Says cities, states can expect more 'central input'

By **Deirdre Fernandes**
GLOBE STAFF

Dr. Anthony Fauci said Wednesday he expects the incoming Biden administration will offer more “central input” to cities and states on how to address the coronavirus pandemic than the hands-off approach favored by President Trump.

Fauci, the longtime director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said the current philosophy of “delegating a lot peripherally to the states and the cities to be on their own” has resulted in a conflicted, uneven response to the crisis.

It “leads to disparateness in terms of the level of responsiveness from one state to another,” Fauci said during a virtual conference attended by New England college and university leaders.

Fauci is a member of Trump’s coronavirus taskforce and one of the most recognizable faces of the public health crisis. President-elect Joe Biden has asked Fauci to remain in his position and serve as his chief medical adviser.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the New England Commission of Higher Education, Fauci also lamented a pervasive

public distrust in science and facts. Deciding whether to follow public health guidelines, such as wearing a mask or avoiding large in-door gatherings, has become a political statement, Fauci said.

“It is astounding how in the face of obvious facts people are still denialists,” Fauci said. “We are in the middle of a historic, devastating pandemic, the likes of which we have not seen in over 100 years. And yet in certain states, cities, and regions of the country — even when the hospitals are overflowing with people who are desperately ill and dying, it’s real data — there are still people who are saying it’s fake news or it’s a hoax.”

Trump has often shunned masks and during the presidential campaign held several large indoor rallies, despite the public health guidance against them.

Fauci said his relationship with Trump has at times been tense, especially when he talks about the science behind public health guidelines that conflicts with statements by the president and his supporters.

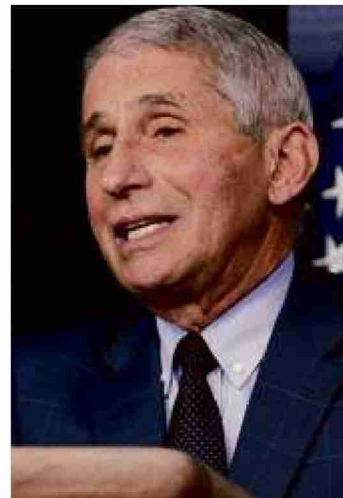
“It’s a complicated relationship. It would be misleading and untruthful to say it’s not,” Fauci said. “But I think even with that, at the end of the day, the bottom

line is we still do have a reasonably good relationship.”

Fauci said the rapid development of safe and effective vaccines for COVID-19 has been a great success story. He and others are trying to assuage concerns about vaccines and convince people they are safe.

By getting vaccinated, “you create an umbrella of protection over society that protects the vulnerable,” Fauci said.

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Dr. Anthony Fauci spoke to the New England Commission of Higher Education.

