

US bill ties WHO funding to Taiwan stance

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WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus attends a news conference at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, on July 3 last year.

Photo: Reuters

Two US senators on Tuesday introduced a WHO accountability bill, seeking to withhold US funding until the organization reforms its leadership and accepts Taiwan as a member state.

US President Joe Biden has since his inauguration on Jan. 20 signed a flurry of executive orders, including one to stop the US' withdrawal from the WHO, reversing former US president Donald Trump's decision last year.

A WHO task force probing the origins of COVID-19 in China on Tuesday wrapped up its investigation with no breakthroughs, although it ruled out a theory that the novel coronavirus had escaped from a Chinese laboratory.

"The mission of the WHO is to get public health information to the world so every country can make the best decisions to keep their citizens safe. The WHO not only failed its mission, but it failed the world when it comes to the coronavirus. They served as a puppet for the Chinese Communist Party — parroting misinformation and helping communist China cover up a global pandemic," US Senator Rick Scott, a Republican, said in a news release on Tuesday.

"Last February, I called on the WHO to do its own in-depth analysis on the extent and origins of the coronavirus. It took them nearly a year to take action and we still have no answer," he said.

"They are complicit in communist China's effort to isolate Taiwan. There is no reason US taxpayers should be spending hundreds of millions a year, more than any other country, to fund the WHO without significant reform," he added.

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Taiwan attended the World Health Assembly, the decisionmaking body of the WHO, as an observer from 2009 to 2016, but has since been denied access.

Scott said he is proud to introduce the bill to withhold US taxpayer dollars from the WHO “until they start actually caring about public health, stop acting like a puppet for the communist China and allow Taiwan as a member.”

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and other WHO leaders must be held accountable for their dereliction of duty, and the WHO should not benefit from US tax dollars again before it undertakes comprehensive reforms, US Senator Josh Hawley, also a Republican, said in the same news release.

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