



# Harvard Model Congress Boston 2024

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## Gain-Of-Function Research Update

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The bills that were mentioned in the Gain-of-Function Research briefing introduced in the 117<sup>th</sup> United States Congress adjourned on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 largely did not pass through Congress. However, in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, multiple similar bills have been presented. First, S.81, titled Viral Gain-of-Function Research MORatorium Act, was introduced and has stagnated after being placed on the legislative calendar (118<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2023). GovTrack, a reliable source for Congressional legislation, estimates this bill has a 3% chance of passing into law (GovTrack, 2023).

Another bill with similar plans of ending Gain-of-Function research is entitled Foreign Adversary Gain-of-Function Research Prevention Act of 2023, or HR 4087 (118<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2023). Recommended to the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, the bill has remained untouched, with GovTrack forecasting a mere 1% success rate (GovTrack, 2023).

The bill with the greatest—yet still incredibly slim—chance of becoming law is HR 1827, labeled Pausing Enhanced Pandemic Pathogen Research Act of 2023. The bill seeks to curtail GOF research, due to fears of leaking contaminants or terrorism (118<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2023). HR 1827 was additionally referred to the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, where it has an expected 4% chance of passing into law (GovTrack, 2023).

Finally, HR 229, a bill designed to fight members of the Chinese Communist Party who are suspected to be interfering with American democracy, was presented under the title, World Deserves to Know Act (118<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2023). This bill is incredibly unlikely to pass, but demonstrates the prevalence of the lab leak theory even among congressmembers.

Additionally, new information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) demonstrates that as of December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 3.6% of all deaths in the United States were due to COVID-19. This brings weekly COVID-19 deaths down from a high of 26,000 in January 2021 to under 2,000 in the last week of 2023 (CDC, 2023).

It will be important to consider COVID-19 transmission and death data week by week, comparing it potentially with the verbiage or release date of Gain-of-Function-related

legislation. COVID-19 is less prevalent than in the past 3 calendar years, but reliable data from the CDC can still provide vital evidence. Statista demonstrates that less than 10% of Americans still consider themselves worried about COVID-19 transmission. Utilize this data to guide your research and understanding (Dyvik, 2023).

As time goes on, fears and prevalence of COVID-19 have plummeted. Do not, however, allow yourself to discount the deep scars the pandemic left on Americans. Consider the deaths, economic failures, and societal changes enacted by COVID-19, and ensure you craft legislation that addresses all factors. The best legislation will be multi-faceted, well-thought-out, and accurate.

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