

The evidence before the Committee leads to one inescapable conclusion: the Bush Administration has engaged in a systematic effort to manipulate climate change science and mislead policymakers and the public about the dangers of global warming.

For the past 16 months, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee has been investigating allegations of political interference with government climate change science under the Bush Administration. During the course of this investigation, the Committee obtained over 27,000 pages of documents from the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and the Commerce Department, held two investigative hearings, and deposed or interviewed key officials. Much of the information made available to the Committee has never been publicly disclosed.

This report presents the findings of the Committee's investigation. The evidence before the Committee leads to one inescapable conclusion: the Bush Administration has engaged in a systematic effort to manipulate climate change science and mislead policymakers and the public about the dangers of global warming.

In 1998, the American Petroleum Institute developed an internal "Communications Action Plan" that stated: "Victory will be achieved when | average citizens 'understand' uncertainties in climate science | [and] recognition of uncertainties becomes part of the 'conventional wisdom.'" The Bush Administration has acted as if the oil industry's communications plan were its mission statement. White House officials and political appointees in the agencies censored congressional testimony on the causes and impacts of global warming, controlled media access to government climate scientists, and edited federal scientific reports to inject unwarranted uncertainty into discussions of climate change and to minimize the threat to the environment and the economy.

The White House Censored Climate Change Scientists

The White House exerted unusual control over the public statements of federal scientists on climate change issues. It was standard practice for media requests to speak with federal scientists on climate change matters to be sent to CEQ for White House approval. By controlling which government scientists could respond to media inquiries, the White House suppressed dissemination of scientific views that could conflict with Administration policies. The White House also edited congressional testimony regarding the science of climate change.

Former CEQ Chief of Staff Philip Cooney told the Committee: “Our communications people would render a view as to whether someone should give an interview or not and who it should be.” According to Kent Laborde, a career public affairs officer at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, media requests related to climate change issues were handled differently from other requests because “I would have to route media inquires through CEQ.” This practice was particularly evident after Hurricane Katrina. Mr. Laborde was asked, “Did the White House and the Department of Commerce not want scientists who believed that climate change was increasing hurricane activity talking with the press?” He responded: “There was a consistent approach that might have indicated that.”

White House officials and agency political appointees also altered congressional testimony regarding the science of climate change. The changes to the recent climate change testimony of Dr. Julie Gerberding, the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have received considerable attention. A year earlier, when Dr. Thomas Karl, the Director of National Climatic Data Center, appeared before the House Oversight Committee, his testimony was also heavily edited by both White House officials and political appointees at the Commerce Department. He was not allowed to say in his written testimony that “modern climate change is dominated by human influences,” that “we are venturing into the unknown territory with changes in climate,” or that “it is very likely (>95 percent probability) that humans are largely responsible for many of the observed changes in climate.” His assertion that global warming “is playing” a role in increased hurricane intensity became “may play.”

The White House Extensively Edited Climate Change Reports

There was a systematic White House effort to minimize the significance of climate change by editing climate change reports. CEQ Chief of Staff Phil Cooney and other CEQ officials made at least 294 edits to the Administration’s Strategic Plan of the Climate Change Science Program to exaggerate or emphasize scientific uncertainties or to deemphasize or diminish the importance of the human role in global warming.

The White House insisted on edits to EPA’s draft Report on the Environment that were so extreme that the EPA Administrator opted to eliminate the climate change section of the report. One such edit was the inclusion of a reference to a discredited, industry-funded paper. In a memo to the Vice President’s office, Mr. Cooney explained: “We plan to begin to refer to this study in Administration communications on the science of global climate change” because it “contradicts a dogmatic view held by many in the climate science community that the past century was the warmest in the past millennium and signals of human induced ‘global warming.’”

In the case of EPA's Air Trends Report, CEQ went beyond editing and simply vetoed the entire climate change section of the report.

Other White House Actions

The White House played a major role in crafting the August 2003 EPA legal opinion disavowing authority to regulate greenhouse gases. CEQ Chairman James Connaughton personally edited the draft legal opinion. When an EPA draft quoted the National Academy of Science conclusion that "the changes observed over the last several decades are likely mostly due to human activities," CEQ objected because "the above quotes are unnecessary and extremely harmful to the legal case being made." The first line of another internal CEQ document transmitting comments on the draft EPA legal opinion reads: "Vulnerability: science." The final opinion incorporating the White House edits was rejected by the Supreme Court in April 2007 in *Massachusetts v. EPA*.

The White House also edited a 2002 op-ed by EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman to ensure that it followed the White House line on climate change. Despite objections from EPA, CEQ insisted on repeating an unsupported assertion that millions of American jobs would be lost if the Kyoto Protocol were ratified.

Documents and Links

- [Report: Political Interference with Climate Change Science Under the Bush Administration](#)
- [Supporting Documents, Part 1](#)
- [Supporting Documents, Part 2](#)
- [Supporting Documents, Part 3](#)