

**HIGHLIGHTS**

*Throughout its first two years, the Trump administration has sidelined science in its handling of critical public health and environmental decisionmaking. Now, the 116th Congress can add an urgently needed check on administration actions. Congress can join with scientists and their supporters to stop the Trump administration's anti-science actions. Today's attacks on science can and will have substantial consequences for public health and the environment for decades to follow. We must continue to push back when science is sidelined. The current and future health and safety of our families our communities, and our nation depend on it.*

# Scientific Integrity Losses and Lessons for the 116th Congress

## *Halting, Suppressing, and Altering Scientific Studies*

As part of its efforts to undermine science in decisionmaking, the Trump administration has been halting, suppressing, and altering scientific analyses. Such studies enable government leaders to make evidence-based decisions, provide vital information to the private sector and the broader public, and help ensure public health, safety, and environmental protection are prioritized.

### Examples

In its first two years, the Trump administration has halted, suppressed, or manipulated scientific studies:

#### ELIMINATION OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

- The Department of Energy stopped the \$100 million Next-Generation Ecosystem Experiment-Tropics research program.
- The Trump administration eliminated funding for critical teen pregnancy prevention programs and research under the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) midway through the grant period.

#### STUDIES SUPPRESSED

- A study conducted and published by the HHS showing the benefits of refugees was suppressed by Senior Policy Advisor Stephen Miller.
- The Treasury Department suppressed a 2012 publication from the Office of Tax Analysis that finds that workers pay 18 percent of the corporate tax burden with owners of capital paying 82 percent.
- According to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) documents, the Department of the Interior (DOI) suppressed evidence showing the benefits of preserving our national monuments in Secretary Zinke's survey of protected sites
- The Trump administration buried a Department of Labor study showing that a proposed rule on service employee tips will lead to \$5.8 billion income loss for employees.

#### CANCELED RESEARCH STUDIES

- The DOI halted a National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) study investigating how the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement could better conduct inspections of offshore oil and gas operations.
- The DOI halted a NASEM study on the health effects of mountaintop removal coal mining in Appalachia.

## ***Scientific studies enable government leaders to make evidence-based decisions.***

- The DOI canceled an environmental impact statement on the impact of sulfur-ore mining in Boundary Waters Canoe Wilderness Area in Minnesota.

### **EXPERTS PREVENTED FROM CONDUCTING RESEARCH**

- Treasury economists were barred from conducting analyses on the long-term economic impact of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

## **Recommendations**

The lack of consideration of scientific evidence in critical policymaking decisions could lead to adverse harms to the public and our environment. Congress should use the range of oversight tactics at its disposal to investigate the public health, safety, and environmental harms caused by the administration's anti-science actions and make the case for proactive policy solutions to strengthen the role of science in policymaking.

Congress can push back against the halting, suppression, and alteration of scientific studies by taking the following actions to help establish, foster, and strengthen a culture of scientific integrity at federal agencies:

- Pass policy solutions that include the following provisions:
  - Allow scientists to review and ensure the accuracy of public-facing materials that rely on their work, such as reports, press releases, and factsheets.
  - Declare scientists' right to review content to be released publicly in their names or that significantly relies on their work.
  - Designate scientific integrity officials who oversee compliance with the scientific integrity policies.
  - Develop a clear and detailed policy and procedure for addressing scientific integrity violation allegations and publicly reporting their resolution.
  - Declare scientists' right to publicly express personal views without seeking permission, provided they make clear they are speaking in a personal capacity
- and let their public affairs offices know as soon as possible after interviews or other media interactions.
- Explicitly prohibit retaliation against those who raise scientific integrity concerns or raise differing scientific opinions.
- Develop a clear and detailed policy and procedure for addressing differing scientific opinions within the agency.
- Declare that employees who leave federal service should not be required to sign nondisclosure agreements that restrict disclosure of government information that is neither classified nor proprietary nor contains confidential personal matters.
- Declare that agency internal review is not required for scientific work done on employees' personal time and that does not use nonpublic government data. This policy should hold even if employees identify their employer for professional identification purposes, provided the work includes a disclaimer that it represents personal views.
- Develop clearance procedures that are clear, consistent, transparent, and predictable. They should include an establishment of reasonable time limits for review and clearance of scientific publications, presentations, and participation in scientific conferences. The supervisor and other reviewing official should provide to the author written clearance, on the condition of specified changes being made, no later than 30 days after submission. If this deadline is not met, the author should be allowed to submit the article for publication or presentation with an appropriate disclaimer stating that the article does not represent agency views or policies.
- Pass legislation to prevent the obstruction of reports in production at NASEM.
- Request a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on the effectiveness of agency scientific integrity policies across the government, including recommendations for enhancement or strengthening of policies and practices.

## ***Congress should use oversight to investigate the administration's anti-science actions.***

- Request NASEM to conduct a study on scientific integrity in government decisionmaking across federal agencies, to include recommendations for its advancement.
- Hold hearings related, but not limited, to:
  - adverse impacts on community health of recent actions, including stopping a NASEM report on the health and environmental impacts of mountaintop removal mining, and the revocation of the stream protection rule;
  - violations of the public trust by the DOI, including actions based on faulty, misrepresented, or sidelined analysis to expand oil and gas extraction on public land, shrink national monuments, and cancel scientific studies of the public health and environmental impacts of oil, gas, coal, and mineral extraction; and
  - political interference in reproductive health science and policy, such as the justification for removing the birth control mandate from implementation of the Affordable Care Act and installation of HHS officials that do not accept basic reproductive science.



FIND THE FULL REPORT AND APPENDIX ONLINE: [www.ucsusa.org/ScienceUnderTrump](http://www.ucsusa.org/ScienceUnderTrump)

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