

Criminal Record Removal

100% Free Qualification Check Limited Time Offer. Get Started Now
pardonsandwaivers.com/record-cleared



A Step Toward Scientific Integrity at the EPA

My op-ed in today's *Wall Street Journal*.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



OPINION | COMMENTARY

A Step Toward Scientific Integrity at the EPA

Scott Pruitt sweeps out Obama-era science advisers. The agency needs truly independent ones.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

By Steve Milloy

July 17, 2017 5:14 p.m. ET

The Trump administration in May began the process of replacing the small army of outside science advisers at the Environmental Protection Agency. In June, 38 additional EPA advisers were notified that their appointments would not be renewed in August. To Mr. Trump's critics, this is another manifestation of his administration's "war on science." Histrionics aside, the administration's actions are long overdue.

The most prominent of the EPA's myriad boards of outside advisers are the Science Advisory Board and the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee, or CASAC. Mostly made up of university professors, these boards also frequently draw members from consulting firms and activist groups. Only rarely do members have backgrounds in industry. All EPA boards are governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which requires that they be balanced and unbiased. While the EPA is required by law to convene the SAB and CASAC, the agency is not bound by law to heed their advice.

The EPA's Obama-era "war on coal" rules and its standards for ground-level ozone—possibly the most expensive EPA rule ever issued—depend on the same scientifically unsupported notion that the fine particles of soot emitted by smokestacks and tailpipes are lethal. The EPA claims that such particles kill hundreds of thousands of Americans annually.

The EPA first considered regulating fine particles in the mid-1990s. But when the agency ran its claims past CASAC in 1996, the board concluded that the scientific evidence did not support the agency's regulatory conclusion. Ignoring the panel's advice, the EPA's leadership chose to regulate fine particles anyway, and resolved to figure out a way to avoid future troublesome opposition from CASAC.

In 1996 two-thirds of the CASAC panel had no financial connection to the EPA. By the mid-2000s, the agency had entirely flipped the composition of the advisory board so two-thirds of its members were agency grantees. Lo and behold, CASAC suddenly agreed with the EPA's leadership that fine particulates in outdoor air kill. During the Obama years, the EPA packed the CASAC panel. Twenty-four of its 26 members are now agency grantees, with some listed as principal investigators on EPA research grants worth more than \$220 million.

Although the scientific case against particulate matter hasn't improved since the 1990s, the EPA has tightened its grip on CASAC. In effect, EPA-funded researchers are empowered to review and approve their own work in order to rubber-stamp the EPA's regulatory agenda. This is all done under the guise of "independence."

Another "independent" CASAC committee conducted the most recent review of the Obama EPA's ground-level ozone standards. Of that panel's 20 members, 70% were EPA grantees who'd hauled in more than \$192 million from the agency over the years. These EPA panels make decisions by consensus, which has lately been easy enough to achieve considering they are usually chaired by an EPA grantee.

Would-be reformers have so far had no luck changing the culture at these EPA advisory committees. In 2016 the Energy and Environment Legal Institute, where I am a senior fellow, sued the agency. We alleged that the CASAC fine-particulate subcommittee was biased—a clear violation of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. We found a plaintiff who had been refused CASAC membership because of his beliefs about fine particles. Unfortunately, that individual was not willing to take a hostile public stand against the EPA for fear of professional retribution. We ultimately withdrew the suit.

The EPA's opaque selection process for membership on its advisory boards has opened the agency to charges of bias. In 2016 Michael Honeycutt, chief toxicologist of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, was recommended in 60 of the 83 nominations to the EPA for CASAC membership. The EPA instead selected Donna Kenski of the Lake Michigan Air Directors Consortium. Ms. Kenski received only one of the 83 recommendations. While no one objected to Mr. Honeycutt's nomination, Sen. James Inhofe (R., Okla.) lodged an objection to Ms. Kenski's nomination, claiming she had exhibited partisanship during an earlier term on the committee.

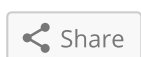
Congress has also tried to reform the EPA's science advisory process. During the three most recent Congresses, the House has passed bills to provide explicit conflict-of-interest rules for EPA science advisers, including bans on receiving EPA grants for three years before and after service on an advisory panel. The bills went nowhere in the Senate, where the threat of a Democrat-led filibuster loomed. Had they passed, President Obama surely would have vetoed them.

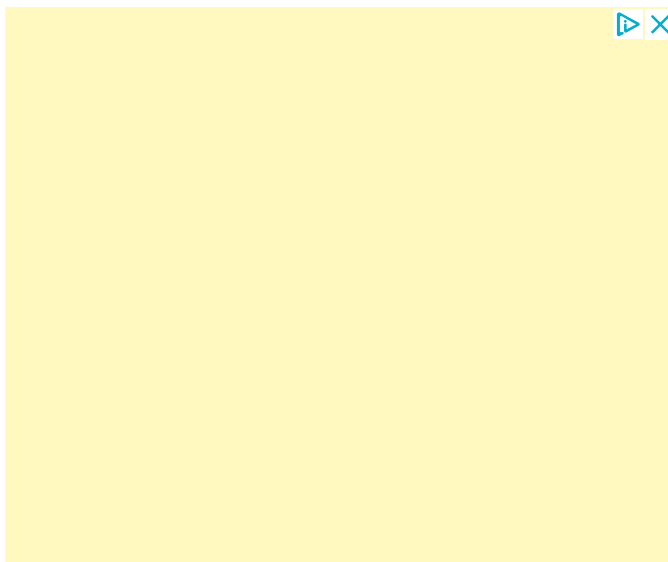
President Trump and his EPA administrator have ample statutory authority to rectify the problem. As Oklahoma's attorney general, Scott Pruitt spent years familiarizing himself with the EPA's unlawful ways. He is in the process of reaffirming the independence of the agency's science advisory committees. This won't mean that committee members can't have a point of view. But a committee as a whole must be balanced and unbiased. Mr. Pruitt's goal is the one intended by Congress—peer review, not pal review.

Mr. Milloy served on the Trump EPA transition team and is the author of "Scare Pollution: Why and How to Fix the EPA."

Appeared in the July 18, 2017, print edition.

SHARE THIS:





7 thoughts on “A Step Toward Scientific Integrity at the EPA”

 **Craig King**

July 18, 2017 at 10:15 AM

Well said Steve. Cleaning things up in the EPA is a process not an event but Scott Pruitt is certainly up to the task.

 **ScienceABC123**

July 18, 2017 at 11:53 AM

Good, there is no such thing as a scientist with a political agenda.

 **Rog. L**

July 18, 2017 at 4:12 PM

More great work, S.M.

Now you're getting more publication in the reputable MSM your revelations must soon start to grab the attention of influential people in other countries and arouse doubt

about the loony-greeny dogma which has prevailed everywhere for the past few decades.....



Eliza

July 18, 2017 at 4:27 PM

Great keep it up



dennisambler

July 19, 2017 at 1:20 PM

Another example of outside influence was the extensive use by the EPA of Stratus Consulting, conveniently based at Boulder, down the road from NCAR. One of the principals was a guy called Joel Smith, in charge of their climate change division.

He edited the EPA Technical Support Document for the EPA Endangerment Finding, with a colleague from Stratus.

This is how the EPA described it:

“This document provides technical support for the endangerment analysis concerning greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that may be addressed under the Clean Air Act.

The conclusions here and the information throughout this document are primarily drawn from the assessment reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the U.S. Climate Change Science Program.

This document itself does not convey any judgment or conclusion regarding the question of whether GHGs may be reasonably anticipated to endanger public health or welfare, as this decision is ultimately left to the judgment of the Administrator.” (At that time, Lisa Jackson)

Smith was an IPCC Lead author for TAR and AR4 WGII chapters and A Lead Author on the Summary for Policy Makers for both TAR and AR4. He was also Lead author for the U.S. National Assessment on climate change impacts and technical coordinator on vulnerability and adaptation for the U.S. Country Studies Program.

Yet Joel Smith is not a climate scientist; he has a BA in Political Science and a Masters in Public Policy. He put his name to a February 2011 “Scientists’ Statement on the Clean

Air Act”, which concluded,

“The EPA must be allowed to fulfill its responsibilities and take action to regulate global warming emissions under the Clean Air Act. This science-based law has prevented 400,000 premature deaths and hundreds of millions of cases of respiratory and cardiovascular disease during the 40 years since it was first passed—all without diminishing economic growth.”

Smith worked for the EPA from 1984 to 1992, where he was the deputy director of the Climate Change Division, an analyst for oceans and water regulations, and a special assistant to the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation.

Stratus was heavily involved in the EPA websites, including the EPA home page, EPA’s environmental education web sites and EPA’s High School Environmental Center

It seems Smith has now joined another outfit which also has extensive contracts with the EPA and other government agencies and clicking on previous Stratus links now takes me to these people:

<http://www.abtassociates.com/About-Us/Our-People/Associates/Joel-B-Smith.aspx>

<http://www.abtassociates.com/environment.aspx>

“Our clients include the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Coast Guard, and Department of Energy, as well as other federal agencies, state and local governments, and non-profit organizations.

Abt also works across the globe. Our international environment and climate change projects are funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, foreign ministries, and select private sector clients.”

<http://abtassociates.com/Practice-Areas/Climate-Change>

“We construct the building blocks of low emission, climate-resilient communities by analyzing, designing, securing financing for, and implementing evidence-based interventions using innovative solutions and proven best practices.”

Let’s hope they come under Scott Pruitt’s microscope.



Joan McDaniel

July 20, 2017 at 8:53 PM

I love reading articles like this, It gives me courage to continue support the process of what we use to call “science”



D. Jellerson

July 27, 2017 at 9:38 AM

not so fast. Take a look at the just released Clean Air Science Advisory Board First External Review Draft of EPA’s Integrated Science Assessment for Oxides of Nitrogen, Oxides of Sulfur and Particulate Matter. Of course it links impacts of these to climate change. It can be found here:

<http://www.epa.gov/casac>

here is the direct link:

[https://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf//LookupWebProjectsCurrentCASAC/404BE6A448BEBB3B8525808300708305/\\$File/NOxSOx+PM+ISA+-+1st+Draft+-+HERO+-+Merged+-+2-22-17.pdf](https://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf//LookupWebProjectsCurrentCASAC/404BE6A448BEBB3B8525808300708305/$File/NOxSOx+PM+ISA+-+1st+Draft+-+HERO+-+Merged+-+2-22-17.pdf)

Comments are closed.

Proudly powered by WordPress