



[5] Trump's War on Science: Making America's government scientifically illiterate again

Law professor Albert Lin at UC Davis wrote a piece in 2018 on Trump's "War on Science"²⁶. I thought it was interesting, and list below some of the salvos in this war that Lin cited. Any one of these items can be explained away; their cumulative impact is what is so striking.

- As of August 2018, Trump had failed to appoint a Presidential science advisor²⁷, and the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology, an advisory group that has existed since 1933, was unpopulated and unstaffed. An economics professor and former talk radio host with no science background was nominated to a Dep't of Agriculture position which requires "specialized training or significant experience in agricultural research and education"; and the AccuWeather CEO was nominated as head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- The EPA relies on advisory boards to inform its activities, including the Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC) and the Science Advisory Board (SAB). In June 2017, the EPA announced it would not renew BOSC members with expiring appointments, cancelled its upcoming meetings, and departed from precedent by declining to renew SAB members. The EPA issued a directive barring scientists that receive EPA grants from serving on committees. Recent SAB appointees include climate skeptics and recipients of industry funding (one attracted attention by downplaying risks of exposure to mercury). Science advisory committees have fewer members and have met less frequently than at any time since the government began collecting data in 1997, and the SAB has not issued a single new report since 2016
- Trump's EPA director proposed including scientists in its policy forums that lack expertise in climate science, as well as non-scientists with clearly articulated views against any climate policy
- The Trump administration wants to prohibit the EPA from issuing rules based on studies that contain "confidential information". As a result, health studies based on confidential patient medical histories could not be used to determine government policy.
- The EPA, the FDA and the Dep't of the Interior have had fewer meetings under Trump than their charters require; across the Federal gov't, advisory committees working on climate issues have been dissolved or allowed to expire. The EPA blocked one of its scientists from giving a keynote address on climate issues affecting Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay
- Online access to climate change data at the EPA, the Dep't of the Interior and other agencies had been curbed, and references to climate change disappeared from agency websites. Researchers have been asked to remove the words "climate change" and "global warming" from Federal grant proposals. The Trump Administration reduced official estimates of the cost of carbon from \$42 per ton to \$1-\$6
- The Interior Dep't top climate change official was reassigned to an office that collects oil and gas royalty payments. Other senior Interior Dep't staffers with scientific expertise were similarly reassigned due to their work on climate issues. Hundreds of EPA officials left the agency under Trump's first year
- In one rulemaking, the Trump EPA cited a source as scientific support that was not a scientific study at all, and in another, the administration criticized a prior rule for "placing too much emphasis on information and conclusions from a scientific report"
- I ran out of room to talk about looser rules on toxic air pollution, methane flaring, vehicle fuel economy, flood standards, coal plant emissions, continental shelf drilling and a collapse in EPA enforcement

²⁶ "President Trump's War on Regulatory Science", Albert C Lin, University of San Diego – Davis Law School, Harvard Environmental Law Review, forthcoming, written August 2018.

²⁷ In February 2019, a Presidential Science Advisor was finally appointed, approved and sworn in. The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy remains at 1/3 of Obama era staffing.



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