

PRO-CON

Will President Trump's new climate change panel give him good advice?



AP Photo/Noah Berger

Firefighters monitor a backfire while battling the Ranch Fire in 2018 near Ladoga, Calif. The years with the most acres burned by wildfires have some of the hottest temperatures, an Associated Press analysis of fire and weather data found. As human-caused climate change has warmed the world over the past 35 years, the land consumed in flames has more than doubled.

PRO: Climate science needs critical review by skeptical experts

WASHINGTON — Is global warming a looming catastrophe? President Donald Trump has often said he doesn't think so, even while his administration continues to release official reports warning that it is.

The president will soon find out who is right by convening a high-level commission to do a critical review of the fourth National Climate Assessment issued last November and other government reports.

Surprisingly, most of the climate science funded by the federal government has never been subjected to the kind of rigorous and exhaustive review that is common practice for other important scientific issues and major engineering projects.

For example, when NASA was putting men on the moon, every piece of equipment and every calculation were scrutinized from every possible angle simply because if anything went wrong the mission would fail.

Serious problems and shortcomings with official climate science have been raised repeatedly in the past by highly qualified scientists such as Princeton's brilliant physics professor William Happer, only to be ignored or dismissed by the federal agencies in charge of producing the reports.

Yet the conclusions and predictions made in these official climate science reports are the basis for proposed energy policies that could cost trillions of dollars in less than a decade and tens of trillions of dollars over several decades.

Given the magnitude of the potential costs involved, taking on trust the bureaucratic processes that have led to official consensus is simply foolish. Thus the review to be undertaken by the proposed President's Commission on Climate Security is long overdue.

To mention only three major issues among many that need to be scrutinized:

First, the computer models used have predicted far more warming than has occurred over the past 40 years. Why have such models failed and why are they still used are important questions.

Second, predictions of the negative impacts of warming, such as sea level rise,

are derived from highly unrealistic scenarios; and positive impacts, such as less ferocious winter storms, are minimized or ignored. What would a more honest accounting of all the possible impacts of climate change look like?

Third, surface temperature data sets appear to have been manipulated to show more warming in the past century than has occurred. The new commission should insist that the debate be based on scrupulously reliable data.

Since news of the proposed review leaked out in February, a furious campaign to stop it has been mounted by the federal climate bureaucracy and their allies in the climate industrial complex.

On the surface, this seems puzzling. If the alarmists are confident that the science contained in the official reports is spot on, they should welcome a review that would finally put to rest the doubts that have been raised.

On the other hand, their opposition suggests that the science behind the climate consensus is highly suspect and cannot withstand critical review. In other words, they've been peddling junk and are about to be found out.

A press release from one alarmist pressure group was headlined: "58 Senior Military and National Security Leaders Denounce NSC Climate Panel."

Denouncing an expert review seems a most inappropriate response, and especially to one that is designed to be open and subject to further review by other experts, such as the National Academies of Science.

I wonder if environmental pressure groups have ever denounced doing another environmental review of projects — for example, the Keystone XL pipeline — they are trying to stop.

Myron Ebell is a prominent climate change denier and director of the Center for Energy and Environment at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, which is financed in part by fossil fuel companies. He was appointed in 2016 by President Trump to lead the transition team for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



Myron Ebell

CON: Trump has ignored every warning about climate change

WASHINGTON — Donald Trump has ignored every warning about the dire threat that climate change poses to our nation.

Whether alarms have come from top climate scientists, our military, national security leaders, businesses or the millions of grassroots activists demanding action, Trump has buried his head in the sand, ignoring all the evidence.

That's why every American should look skeptically at the new panel Trump claims will analyze the threat of climate change to our national security.

When you look closely at the climate denier Trump has named to lead this panel, it's clear that it will be nothing more than a front for continued inaction and ignorance.

After a historically strong hurricane and wildfire season, we're already witnessing the devastation climate change can cause — and this is just the beginning.

Report after report has detailed the food shortages, droughts and global turmoil to come as climate change gets worse.

The National Climate Assessment found that if we don't take action, climate disruption poses a major threat to our health, safety and economy.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report shows that we have 12 years to act decisively to prevent the most catastrophic effects of the climate crisis.

Furthermore, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats released a threat assessment that identified climate disruption as a significant security risk.

As a veteran, our national security is important to me, and that's why I took him at his word. Yet, Trump turned his back on these warnings and instead relies on denying the fact that the climate is changing.

In theory, if Trump's newly created panel took the existing science and military analysis into account to advise him on how "a changing climate could affect the security of the United States," it could be a step in the right direction.

But, in reality, he has enlisted a notable climate denier, William Happer, to lead the committee, which ensures that real-

ity will be ignored by this panel and this administration.

The likelihood of fossil fuel-funded, climate-denying Happer accurately advising Trump on the security threats of climate change are the same as Joe Camel telling you to quit smoking — it's not going to happen.

Consider Happer's long record of denying the reality of the climate crisis while taking money from the fossil-fuel industry.

He is a former chair of the board of directors at the Exxon-funded George C. Marshall Institute. He was caught in a sting accepting payment of \$250 an hour to produce a pro-fossil fuel report. His CO2 Coalition raked in thousands from coal companies.

With all this corporate-polluter money, it's no surprise that Happer is parroting their talking points.

In 2015, he told Congress that the world has too little of the carbon pollution that fuels the climate crisis and claimed it is too cold, even as we shatter all-time temperature records.

And that's just part of Happer's pattern of denial. He has even gone so far as to say that carbon pollution should be viewed as an asset rather than a pollutant and compared climate science that saves lives to the "demonization of poor Jews under Hitler."

It doesn't make sense, but denial of reality never does. Given this, the odds of this panel accurately informing Trump about the many threats of climate disruption are slim to none.

We should instead expect Happer to try to enable Trump to tear down the military and national security agencies' sound assertions that climate change poses a serious, immediate national security threat.

The science is already clear. Our military leaders have spoken. As historically cataclysmic hurricanes and wildfires occur, we need action, not a sham committee headed by a climate denier acting in the interest of the people who created this crisis in the first place.

An Army veteran who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, Rob Vessels heads the Sierra Club's Military Outdoors Initiative.



Rob Vessels