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Retreat From Science is "Staggering" Scientists Attack Upton-Inhofe Bill (H.R. 910)

March 31, 2011

Dear Colleague:

I write to bring to your attention an opinion editorial that appeared earlier this month in *Politico*, in which four of our nation's leading climate scientists assail recent Republican attacks on science.

As the authors of the *Politico* piece note, the recently-introduced Upton-Inhofe bill (H.R. 910) would legislatively overturn EPA's scientific finding that greenhouse gas emissions endanger health and the environment. The Upton-Inhofe bill would also remove EPA's authority to protect the American public from carbon pollution and the impacts of climate change.

We in Congress can change the laws of our country, but we cannot alter the laws of nature. I urge you to listen to the scientists and oppose the radical Upton-Inhofe bill.

If you or your staff have any questions about this legislation, please contact Laurel Angell on my staff at 5-4431.

Sincerely,



DIANA L. DEGETTE
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Committee on Energy and Commerce

POLITICO

A science-free Congress?

By: John Abraham and Michael Mann and Michael Oppenheimer and Peter Gleick
March 8, 2011 04:35 AM EST

To our dismay, and the nation's detriment, self-described climate change deniers — strongly supported by fossil-fuel interests — continue to mislead Congress and the public.

In late January, we joined 14 other leading scientists in writing a letter to every member of Congress, asking our elected representatives to separate science from policy. We called attention to the overwhelming scientific evidence of climate change, urging Congress to “address the challenge of climate change, and lead the national response...” We want Congress to understand that, with each passing day, the problem worsens.

Our letter was certainly not the first plea to Congress to address climate change, and it won't be the last. An open letter just last May from 255 members of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences urged similar actions. But the race to run away from the problem is nothing short of staggering.

Nothing exemplifies this more than a bill by House Energy and Commerce Committee chairman, Rep. Fred Upton (R-Mich.), to overturn the scientific finding by the Environmental Protection Agency that greenhouse gases are harmful to human health. We are saddened and disturbed that Upton is apparently planning to hold a vote in committee very soon to overturn a science-based determination absent any scientific justification for doing so.

This science-free approach serves only the interests of oil and coal producers and other big polluters who don't want Congress — or the American people — to know what decades of scientific research have revealed about current climate trends and the growing future risks we face.

Science is the Achilles heel for those who try to perpetuate the myth that climate change is not occurring, or that the massive build-up of heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere is not the main reason the climate is changing. There is no serious disagreement in the scientific community that global temperatures are increasing, sea levels are rising, the oceans are becoming more acidic and that fossil fuel combustion is the primary cause.

In addition, the rapid shrinking of Arctic sea ice and the pattern of extreme weather and climate — including widespread drought, extraordinarily intense rainstorms, heat waves and wildfires — reflect more than just natural climate variability.

These findings have been confirmed by all the leading scientific academies around the world, most prominent among them, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, which last year issued a series of four comprehensive reports that were unambiguous. The academy stated, “Climate change is occurring, is caused largely by human activities ... and in many cases is already affecting a broad range of human and natural systems.”

Like the tobacco industry before them, fossil fuel interests regularly trot out discredited voices, false and disproven arguments and selective and misleading evidence to generate doubt. Their goal is to create the perception that fundamental aspects of climate science are controversial. They are not.

All their claims, all the studies they cite and all the evidence they have presented has been thoroughly reviewed by climate scientists. There is no scientific basis for contesting the academy’s finding. But that doesn’t stop fossil fuel interests from pouring millions of dollars into distorting, misrepresenting and, at times, falsifying the science.

We are disheartened that many in Congress choose to be guided by those who profit from pollution. Now we learn that Republicans in the House are proposing to cut more than \$170 million in climate change programs, as well as to compromise the EPA’s ability to carry out its science-based mission. Given the staggering costs of disaster response and the financial ambush awaiting us if we fail to anticipate the risk of massive climate disruption, such action can only be labeled irresponsible.

These same Republicans pledged no cuts to national security. Yet the growing risk of climate change has been clearly identified as a national security threat by top military experts and analysts.

If Congress turns a deaf ear to science, it would be up to mayors, city planners, the building trades, transportation officials, health care workers, small and large businesses, universities, city councils, agriculture interests, water management officials and many others to take the lead in laying out the risks. We are grateful that many already are.

John Abraham is an associate professor of thermal sciences at the University of St. Thomas. Peter Gleick is the president of The Pacific Institute. Michael Mann is the director of the Earth Science Center at Penn State University. Michael Oppenheimer is a professor of geosciences at Princeton University.