

The title of today's hearing has an odious ring—"Shaping the Message, Distorting the Science." These accusations, leveled against ExxonMobil and against the Administration, have a grave tone. If it were not for the ubiquitous press headlines declaring the world's imminent demise from global warming, the title of today's hearing could lead us to falsely conclude that the climate change debate is being stifled. I am now the Ranking Member on a Committee devoted almost entirely to climate change, and a recent poll by Time Magazine found that 88% of Americans believe that the Earth is getting warmer. All of this makes me wonder why we are here and what relationship this hearing has with reality.

The alleged distortion of science is purportedly happening in two different ways. First, major industries, particularly ExxonMobil, are allegedly deceiving the masses by intentionally funding and trumpeting false science. Second, the Administration is allegedly curbing Federal scientists from presenting scientific findings that are at odds with its policies. Before we start screaming "McCarthyism," we should examine how little merit these accusations actually have.

The first alleged distortion of science was purportedly perpetrated by ExxonMobil. The report "Smoke, Mirrors, and Hot Air" by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) accuses ExxonMobil of using "big tobacco's tactics to manufacture uncertainty on climate science." The crux of UCS' argument relies on \$16 million that ExxonMobil spent over a period of 7 years to promote science that UCS disagrees with. UCS concedes that what amounts to a little over \$2 million per year is a modest sum of money for a company that records profits of \$100 million per day, but nonetheless, argues that ExxonMobil has been "remarkably effective at manufacturing uncertainty about the scientific consensus on global warming."

ExxonMobil's efforts seem especially remarkable in light of the fact that it spends significantly more money to fund projects that even UCS concedes are credible. To name a few, ExxonMobil has supported projects with Carnegie Mellon, the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction, Columbia University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Texas, and Yale. In just one instance, ExxonMobil pledged \$100 million over ten years for Stanford University's Global Climate and Energy Project, which seeks to develop "new energy technologies that will permit the development of global energy systems with significantly lower global warming emissions." Is the work at Stanford University similarly suspect? How can we fairly accuse ExxonMobil of spreading a campaign of misinformation when it is funding a full spectrum of scientific research?

The second method of scientific distortion purportedly comes from the Administration. Despite its accusatory title, the Government Accountability Project's report, "Redacting the Science of Climate Change," concedes that it found "no incidents of direct interference in climate change research." Regarding climate change scientists, the report concludes:

[T]he investigation by the Government Accountability Project has uncovered no concrete evidence that political actors are directly and willfully interfering with this fundamental aspect of scientific work.”

Thus, despite its lengthy report and its yearlong investigation, GAP did not find any evidence that the Administration had interfered with climate change research.

Just as the integrity of Federal research is not attacked, there are no serious allegations that the Administration is concealing the results of this research from the public. When asked about scientific integrity at his agency, Robert Atlas, Director of the Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory (AOML) at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, responded:

I have not observed any political interference with our ability at AOML to communicate scientific information. All of our scientists are free to publish their results in the refereed scientific literature and to present high quality research at national or international conferences. Only the quality of the research is scrutinized and scientists are encouraged to present their conclusions that are supported by their research.”

This sentiment is echoed by the scientific community. Eighty-eight percent of federal climate scientists surveyed believe that federal government climate research is of generally excellent quality and 70% believe that federal climate research is independent and impartial.

So, to recap, there is no evidence that the policymakers seek to control or influence scientific research, federal scientists are freely encouraged to publish the results of their research, and the relevant scientists overwhelmingly believe that their research is independent and impartial. And yet, the title of today’s hearing is “Shaping the message, Distorting the Science?” Wouldn’t “Partisanship for the Sake of Partisanship” have been more accurate? If the science is independent and the results are freely published, the only thing policymakers are controlling is policy. Surely, the Federal government has a right to oversee Federal scientists and speak with a consistent message.

Furthermore, both NASA and NOAA have taken steps to address potential problems. NASA introduced a media policy that was widely accepted by the scientific community, and NOAA plans to adopt a similar policy in the coming weeks. Additionally, the Inspectors General at the Department of Commerce and NASA, as well as the Government Accountability Office, all have ongoing investigations related to this topic. The Full Committee plans to hold a hearing on this topic after these reports are released. We will have an opportunity to examine any potential problems, in detail, when these reports are released.

I believe very strongly in Congress’ responsibility to hold the executive branch accountable. And I believe that the federal government should pursue policies that are both environmentally and economically sound. I look forward to an opportunity to leave these partisan investigations behind and focus on these shared goals.”