

BRINGING INTEGRITY BACK TO THE IPCC PROCESS ON BRINGING INTEGRITY BACK TO THE IPCC PROCESS

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I have addressed this chamber on the subject of [global warming](#) many times over the last few years. In those speeches, I presented well-documented facts regarding the science and economics of the global warming issue that, sadly, many of my colleagues and the public heard for the very first time.

Today, I will discuss something else – scientific integrity and how to improve it. Specifically, I will discuss the systematic and documented abuse of the scientific process by an international body that claims it provides the most complete and objective scientific assessment in the world on the subject of climate change – the United Nations-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC. I will conclude with a series of recommendations as to the minimum changes the IPCC must make if it is to restore its credibility.

When I became Chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, one of my top three priorities was to improve the quality of environmental science used in public policymaking by taking the politics out of science. I have convened hearings on this subject and the specific issue of global warming science.

I am a U.S. Senator, and a former mayor and businessman. I am not a scientist. But I do understand politics. And the more I have delved into the issue, the more convinced I have become that science is being co-opted by those who care more about peddling fear of gloom and doom to further their own, broader agendas than they do about scientific integrity.

I am committed to shining a light on their activities. Global warming alarmists will undoubtedly continue to accuse me of attacking the science of global warming – that is part of their game. But nothing could be further from the truth. I support and defend credible, objective science by exposing the corrupting influences that would subvert it for political purposes. Good policy must be based on good science, and that requires science be free of bias, whatever its conclusions.

As nations meet again next month in Montreal to discuss global warming, the pronouncements of the IPCC leaders will gain renewed attention as they continue their efforts to craft a fourth assessment of the state of global warming science. If the fourth assessment is to have any credibility, fundamental changes will need to be made.

The flaws in the IPCC process began to manifest themselves in the first assessment, but did so in earnest when the IPCC issued its second assessment report in 1996. The most obvious was the altering of the document on the central question of whether man is causing global warming.

Here is what Chapter 8 – the key chapter in the report – stated on this central question in the final version accepted by reviewing scientists:

“No study to date has positively attributed all or part [of the climate change observed to date] to anthropogenic causes.”

But when the final version was published, this and similar phrases in 15 sections of the chapter were deleted or modified. Nearly all the changes removed hints of scientific doubts regarding the claim that human activities are having a major impact on global warming.

In the Summary for Policy Makers – which is the only part of the report that reporters and policy makers read – a single phrase was inserted. It reads:

“The balance of evidence suggests that there is a discernible human influence on global climate.”

The lead author for Chapter 8, Dr. Ben Santer, should not be held solely accountable. According to the journal *Nature*, the changes to the report were made in the midst of high-level pressure from the Clinton / Gore State Department to do so. I understand that after the State Department sent a letter to Sir John Houghton, co-Chairman of the IPCC, Houghton prevailed upon Santer to make the changes. The impact was explosive, with media across the world, including heavyweights such as Peter Jennings, declaring this as proof that man is responsible for global warming.

Notably, polls taken shortly afterwards showed scant support for the statement. The word “discernible” implies measurable or detectable, and depending on how the question was asked, only 3- 19 percent of American scientists concurred.

In 2001, the third assessment report was published. Compared with the flaws in the third assessment, those in the second assessment appear modest. The most famous is the graph produced by Dr. Michael Mann and others. Their study concluded that the 20th century was the warmest on record in the last 1,000 years, showing flat temperatures until 1900 and then spiking upward – in short, it looked like a hockey stick. It achieved instant fame as proof of man’s causation of global warming because it was featured prominently in the Summary Report read by the media.

Since then, the hockey stick has been shown to be a relic of bad math and impermissible practices. Dr. Hans von Storch, a prominent German researcher with the GKSS Institute for Coastal Research – who, I’m told, believes in global warming – put it this way:

“Methodologically it is wrong: rubbish.”

In fact, a pair of Canadian researchers showed that when random data is fed into Michael Mann’s mathematical construct, it produces a hockey stick more than 99 percent of the time. Yet the IPCC immortalized the hockey stick as the proof positive of catastrophic global warming.

How can such a thing occur? Sadly, it is due to the institutional structure of the IPCC itself – it breeds manipulation.

First, the IPCC is a political institution. Its charter is to support the efforts of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which has the basic mission of eliminating the threat of global

warming. This clearly creates a conflict of interest with the standard scientific goal of assessing scientific data in an objective manner.

The IPCC process itself illustrates the problem. The Summary Report for Policymakers is not approved by the scientists and economists who contribute to the report. It is approved by Intergovernmental delegates – in short, politicians. It doesn't take a leap of imagination to realize that politicians will insist the report support their political agenda.

A typical complaint of scientists and economists is that the Summary does not adequately reflect the uncertainties associated with tentative conclusions in the basic report. The uncertainties identified by contributing authors and reviewers seem to disappear or are downplayed in the Summary.

A corollary of this is that lead authors and the Chair of the IPCC control too much of the process. The old adage "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely" applies. Only a handful of individuals were involved in changing the entire tone of the second assessment. Likewise, Michael Mann was a Chapter lead author in the third assessment.

One stark example of how the process has been corrupted involves a U.S. Government scientist who is among the world's most respected experts on hurricanes – Dr. Christopher Landsea. Earlier this year, Dr. Landsea resigned as a contributing author in the upcoming fourth assessment. His reason was simple – the lead author for the Chapter on extreme weather, Dr. Kevin Trenberth, had demonstrated he would pursue a political agenda linking global warming to more severe hurricanes.

Trenberth had spoken at a forum where he was introduced as a lead author and proceeded to forcefully make the link. He has spoken here in the Senate as well, and it is clear that Trenberth's mind is completely closed on the issue. The only problem is that Trenberth's views are not widely accepted among the scientific community. As Landsea put it last winter:

"All previous and current research in the area of hurricane variability has shown no reliable, long-term trend up in the frequency or intensity of tropical cyclones, either in the Atlantic or any other basin."

When Landsea brought it to the attention of the IPCC, he was told that Trenberth – who as lead author is supposed to bring a neutral, unbiased perspective to his position – would keep his position. Landsea concluded that:

"Because of Dr. Trenberth's pronouncements, the IPCC process on our assessment of these crucial extreme events in our climate system has been subverted and compromised, its neutrality lost."

Landsea's experience is not unique. Richard Lindzen, a prominent MIT researcher who was a contributing author to a Chapter in the third assessment, among others has said that the Summary did not reflect the Chapter he contributed to. But when you examine how the IPCC is structured, is it really so surprising?

Second, the IPCC has demonstrated an unreasoning resistance to accepting constructive critiques of its scientific and economic methods, even in the report itself. Of course, combined with my first point, this is a recipe for de-legitimizing the entire endeavor in terms of providing credible information that is useful to policy makers.

Let me offer a few examples of what I am talking about.⁴

Malaria is considered one of the four greatest risks associated with global warming. But the relationship between climate and mosquito populations is highly complex. There are over 3,500 species of mosquito, and all breed, feed, and behave differently. Yet the nine lead authors of the health section in the second assessment had published only six research papers on vector-borne diseases among them.

Dr. Paul Reiter of the Pasteur Institute, a respected entomologist who has spent decades studying mosquito-borne malaria, believes that global warming would have little impact on the spread of malaria. But the IPCC refused to consider his views in its third assessment, and has completely excluded him from contributing to the fourth assessment.

Here's another example: To predict future global warming, the IPCC estimated how much world economies would grow over the next century. Future increases in carbon dioxide emission estimates are directly tied to growth rates, which in turn drive the global warming predictions.

Unfortunately, the method the IPCC uses to calculate growth rates is wrong. It also contains assumptions that developing nations will experience explosive growth – in some cases, becoming wealthier than the United States. These combine to greatly inflate even its lower-end estimates of future global warming.

The IPCC, however, has bowed to political pressure from the developing countries that refuse to acknowledge the likelihood they will not catch up to the developed world. The result: Future global warming predictions by the IPCC are based on a political choice, not on credible economic methodologies.

Likewise, the IPCC ignored the advice of economists who conclude that, if global warming is real, future generations would have a higher quality of life if societies maximize economic growth and adapt to future warming rather than trying to drastically curb emissions. The IPCC turns a deaf ear.

This problem with the economics led to a full-scale inquiry by the UK's House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs. The ensuing report should be required reading. The Committee identified numerous problems with the IPCC.

In fact, the problems identified were so substantial, it led Lord Nigel Lawson, former Chancellor of the Exchequer and a Member of the Committee, to recently state:

“I believe the IPCC process is so flawed, and the institution, it has to be said, so closed to reason, that it would be far better to thank it for the work it has done, close it down, and transfer all future international collaboration on the issue of climate change...”

To regain its credibility, the IPCC must correct its deficiencies in all of the following areas before it releases its fourth assessment report.

Structurally, the IPCC must:

Adopt procedures by which scientific reviewers formally approve both the Chapters and the Summary Report for Policymakers. Government delegates should not be part of the approval process. Limit the authority of lead authors and the Chair to introduce changes after approval by the reviewers. Create an ombudsman for each Chapter. These ombudsmen should consult with reviewers who believe valid issues are not being addressed, and disseminate a report for reviewers prior to final approval which is made part of the final document. Institute procedures to ensure that an adequate cross-section of qualified scientists wishing to participate in the process is selected based on unbiased criteria. The ombudsmen should review complaints of bias in the selection process.

There are many specific issues that the IPCC must address as well. For instance, the IPCC must:

Ensure that uncertainties in the state of knowledge are clearly expressed in the Summary for Policymakers. Provide highly defensible ranges of the costs of controlling greenhouse gas emissions. Defensibly assess the effects of land-use changes in causing observed temperature increases. Provide highly defensible ranges of the benefits of global warming. Examine the costs and benefits of an adaption strategy versus a mitigation strategy. Adequately examine studies finding a cooling trend of the Continental Antarctic for the last 40 years, as well as increases in the Antarctic ice mass. Adequately explain why the models predict greater warming than has been observed, avoiding use of selective data sets. Ensure an unbiased assessment of the literature on hurricanes. Ensure adequate review of malaria predictions by a range of specialists in the field, ensuring all views are expressed.

There are dozens more issues, most of which are as important as the ones I've just raised. Instead of listing them all here, I intend to post on my Committee's website this winter a more exhaustive and detailed list of issues that must be addressed in the fourth assessment.

In concluding, I'd quote from an article in Der Spiegel by Dr. von Storch and Dr. Nico Stehr, who is with Zeppelin University. They wrote:

“Other scientists are succumbing to a form of fanaticism almost reminiscent of the McCarthy era... Silencing dissent and uncertainty for the benefit of a politically worthy cause reduces credibility, because the public is more well-informed than generally assumed. In the long term, the supposedly useful dramatizations achieve exactly the opposite of what they are intended to achieve. If this happens, both science and society will have missed an opportunity.”

It is my solemn hope that the IPCC will listen the words of Drs. von Storch and Stehr and not miss the opportunity to re-establish its credibility. Only then will its work product be useful to policymakers. If the IPCC remains committed to its current path, however, then Lord Lawson's solution is the only viable one – the IPCC should be disbanded.

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