



Coalitions For and Against CO2

Large numbers of scientists have petitioned President Trump, both to highly regulate CO2 and to tout CO2's benefits and downplay dangers. To whom will he listen?



Hundreds of climate scientists across the globe are petitioning President Donald Trump to withdraw from a United Nations environmental treaty ratified in 1992 by President George H.W. Bush. Their message, dubbed “The CO2 Coalition Petition” and delivered February 23, is succinct:

We urge the United States government, and others, to withdraw from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). We support reasonable and cost-effective environmental protection. But carbon dioxide, the target of the UNFCCC, is not a pollutant but a major benefit to agriculture and other life on Earth. Observations since the UNFCCC was written 25 years ago show that warming from increased atmospheric CO2 will be benign — much less than initial model predictions.

More than 300 eminent scientists signed the missive, amid major media rumors that President Trump is hedging on his campaign promise to pull out of the Paris Agreement. Acting without congressional approval, President Obama signed on to that UN agreement, promising to drastically cut greenhouse-gas emissions. The Paris Agreement on climate change went into effect last November and is, according to the UN website, a legally binding global climate deal falling under the auspices of the UNFCCC.

Climate alarmists are reeling over Trump's intentions for the Paris Agreement, but cooler-headed scientists urge him to go a step further. They're asking for complete withdrawal from the UNFCCC, which one petition signer criticizes as “an outdated international agreement that targets minor greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide (CO2) for harsh regulation.” So states Dr. Richard Lindzen, professor emeritus of atmospheric sciences at MIT. “Carbon dioxide is not a pollutant,” he explained in a cover letter accompanying the petition.

Lindzen went on to defend CO2 as a vital atmospheric asset. “There is clear evidence that increased atmospheric carbon dioxide is environmentally helpful to food crops and other plants that nourish all life,” he wrote. “It is plant food, not poison.”

CO2 and Climate

Does CO2 control climate? In 2009, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that six greenhouse gases (GHGs) — mainly carbon dioxide — threaten public health and the environment. Touting the importance of regulating such supposed hazards, then-EPA administrator Lisa Jackson called it “carbon dioxide pollution” in one carbon-dioxide-exhaling breath.

Yet when you look at the makeup of Earth's atmosphere, Jackson's claim is a gas. According to the



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nonprofit think tank, National Center for Policy Analysis, man-made CO₂ amounts to 3.5 percent of all the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. That means 96.5 percent comes from natural sources such as decomposition, respiration, and ocean release. Added together, all that CO₂ equates to less than 0.04 percent of the atmosphere. So even if you were to double the human contribution to 7 percent of 0.04 percent, the change would be statistically insignificant.

In fact, there is another gas that makes up 95 percent of all GHGs, dwarfing CO₂ as an atmospheric player. Why didn't the EPA classify it as a pollutant? Because it's hard to slap a label like that on water vapor.

"Climate is the most complex, coupled, non-linear, chaotic system known to man," explained Philip Stott, professor emeritus of biogeography at the University of London. Arguing for the proposition that "Major Reductions in Carbon Emissions Are Not Worth the Money," Stott said, "Of course there are human influences in [climate]; nobody denies that. But what outcome will they get by fiddling with one variable at the margins? I'm sorry. It's scientific nonsense!"

The EPA ruled otherwise, saying that "the root cause of global warming is greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere" and claiming it had evaluated "the entire body of scientific literature" to make its decision. Oh no it didn't. It missed several decades' worth of research indicating that the ability of CO₂ to trap heat close to Earth's surface declines logarithmically as atmospheric concentrations increase, similar to the economic Law of Diminishing Returns. This is summarized by geologist and *New York Times* best-selling author H. Leighton Steward, on his blog [PlantsNeedCO2.org](#). Steward explains that "at low concentrations, CO₂ does exert a significant warming of the lower atmosphere. But as the absorption bands in which CO₂ captures this rising heat begin to get saturated, CO₂ can capture less and less heat with each additional unit of CO₂." In fact, historic data reveals much higher-than-current levels of atmospheric CO₂ during both ice ages and warm periods, leading Steward to point out, "These real world observations lead us to believe that Earth is not very sensitive to CO₂ and that many other factors have a stronger influence on the climate."

But can we (or the EPA) know for sure? "There is no definitive proof, through real-world observation, that carbon dioxide is responsible for any of the slight warming of the global climate that has occurred during the past 300 years," stated Greenpeace co-founder Dr. Patrick Moore at the 2015 Annual Global Warming Policy Foundation Lecture in London. Moore also signed the CO₂ Coalition Petition and is a huge fan of CO₂. "We are witnessing the greening of the earth as higher levels of CO₂ ... promote increased growth of plants around the world," Moore pointed out. "And what could be wrong with that, as forests and agricultural crops become more productive?"

The Politics of Climate Change

However, Moore and his co-signers may be disappointed in the results of their CO₂-championing petition. Unlike the Paris Agreement, the UNFCCC is a U.S. Senate-approved treaty. Since Obama shook hands at the Paris talks without congressional approval, Trump can relatively easily cancel U.S. involvement in the Paris Agreement. To be specific, it "prohibits any exit for a period of three years, plus a year-long notice period," according to the French environment minister, Segolene Royal, when questioned about Trump's intentions by Agence France-Presse.

Withdrawing from the UNFCCC could be more difficult since the Senate ratified this treaty in 1992.



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“The Constitution sets forth a definite procedure for the President to make treaties with the advice and consent of the Senate,” explains the Congressional Research Service, “but it does not describe how they should be terminated.” However, it’s likely that Congress would want some say in the matter.

Regardless, the skeptics’ appeal continues to garner signatures through the Swedish blog Klimatsans.com. It comes on the heels of another plea made by 800 scientists in December, lobbying for the president to “take immediate and sustained actions against human-caused climate change.” That open letter — now a public petition at Change.org — stands in sharp contrast to the “CO2 Coalition Petition,” which makes its arguments based solely on available scientific evidence in regard to carbon dioxide. On the contrary, the alarmists’ open letter offers no scientific basis for its claim that climate change “threatens America’s economy, national security and public health and safety.” Rather, it makes six purely political appeals, with its only justification being the unsubstantiated claim that two-thirds of Americans agree with them.

First, it calls for Trump to “make America a clean energy leader” by further subsidizing — with your tax dollars — so-called renewable energies, none of which are capable of supporting the energy needs of an industrial economy. Second, its signers want the president to “reduce carbon pollution and America’s dependence on fossil fuels,” repeating the EPA’s “carbon pollution” fallacy and promoting the worn-out propoganda that energy consumption is somehow evil or wrong.

Next, the open letter states that climate change “continues to increase the frequency and severity” of extreme weather events and asks Trump for further taxpayer subsidies to “enhance America’s climate preparedness and resilience.” Then, using a shameful bandwagon argument, the letter demands that the president publicly “acknowledge that climate change is a real, human-caused and urgent threat,” because otherwise “you will become the only government leader in the world to deny climate science.”

The letter’s fifth request is to “protect scientific integrity in policymaking” by excluding scientists from the Trump administration who maintain a healthy skeptical view and do not accept the “science is settled” argument. Lastly, it asks Trump to “uphold America’s commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement,” warning in dramatic hyperbole that otherwise, “The United States will lose its seat of influence at the international negotiating table, and will cede to China, the EU, and other countries its authority as a political, technological, and moral leader.”

We have reason to hope Trump will keep his campaign promises to unshackle science from climate propoganda.



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