



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on May 25, 2012

## Wind Energy Subversion: Fact or Fiction?

The [Guardian](#) recently reported a billionaire-funded vast right-wing conspiracy to sabotage President Obama's energy agenda and defeat him in the upcoming elections. Environmental correspondent Suzanne Goldenberg pointed to a February meeting held in Washington, D.C., of what she called "a network of ultra-conservative groups" backed by the billionaire industrialist Koch brothers. Adding fuel to the fire, she also revealed a "confidential strategy memo" discussed at the meeting which advised "using 'subversion' to build a national movement of wind farm protesters."



The problem with the story "is that it is about 90 percent false *and the reporter knew it.*" So says physicist and environmental advocate John Droz, Jr., (above, left) who spearheaded the February meeting. "This writer knowingly perverted the situation to promote her own political agenda," Droz stated in an interview with *The New American*. Goldenberg had interviewed him about the event which he describes as a "cross-section of U.S. citizens — both Democrats and Republicans — who met to discuss ideas concerning how to bring about a less-expensive, more-effective science-based energy policy."

Droz maintains that, though the meeting did take place, most of Goldenberg's retelling is a work of fiction. He said a number of other publications, including the [Huffington Post](#) and [Think Progress](#) picked up, and in some cases expanded on, the fabrication. Droz is amazed these reporters printed the scoop without ever contacting him to confirm it. "This is an interesting case of how misinformation spreads like wildfire," he noted. He believes it calls into question the journalistic integrity of mainstream environmental reporting.

To date, Goldenberg has ignored requests for corrections, as have the other reporters save [one](#). And Droz says quite a few corrections are in order.

First, he recounts that the meeting was his own idea and was not funded by any organization, though Goldenberg mentions various groups such as Americans for Prosperity and the American Legislative Exchange Council — groups she says are funded by the Koch brothers. There were indeed attendees who belong to these organizations; Droz himself is a senior fellow with the American Tradition Institute, an honorary position for which he receives no compensation. "There were also participants that belonged to many other groups, like Audubon," Droz pointed out. "How come Audubon wasn't listed as part of this fabricated conspiracy?"

In fact, he says he invited only individuals; no groups participated, contributed or had any influence over the meeting. Moreover, none of the attendees received compensation of any kind but even paid for their own transportation, food and lodging. Droz emphasizes that the apolitical meeting involved only private U.S. citizens who gathered to discuss ways to influence energy policies based on scientific fact rather than media hype or lobbyist jargon. Contrary to the *Guardian* story, President Obama and his



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energy agenda were never discussed.

The “confidential strategy memo” Goldenberg found so damning was actually an e-mail sent by a private individual to Droz (not prepared by him, as the *Guardian* said) prior to the meeting. It contained proposed agenda items that were never discussed (as the *Guardian* claimed) because the 20 participants (not 30 as reported by the *Guardian*) ran out of time. The gist of the e-mail was to suggest a national public relations campaign with a “consistent, positive” message that science should influence energy and environmental policies. The main controversy seems to stem from the use of the word “subversion” in one PR campaign goal listed in the memo: “Cause subversion in message of industry so that it effectively becomes so bad no one wants to admit in public they are for it (much like wind has done to coal, by turning green to black and clean to dirty).”

Though Droz says discussion of proposals in that memo never took place, Goldenberg wrote the attendees’ “main priority was coordinating PR strategy.” She went on to quote Gabe Elsner, co-director of the [Checks and Balances Project](#) (CBP), as charging, “These documents show for the first time that local Nimby [Not In My Back Yard] anti-wind groups are coordinating and working with national fossil-fuel funded advocacy groups to wreck the wind industry.”

Droz’s retort: 100 percent false. “The meeting’s primary objective was to assure these independent citizens were on the same page about the message – science,” he said. According to Droz, CBP’s motivation to investigate the citizens DC meeting was that his “network of pro-science citizens has taken on the powerful wind lobby and has been effective.” They have campaigned heavily to defeat four federal bills introduced since late last year to extend the [Production Tax Credit](#) for so-called renewable energy. “In each case our network was energized, and we made thousands of phone calls to selected congressional people,” explained Droz. “Each of these bills subsequently failed.”

Marita Noon attended the meeting and backs up Droz’s account in her article [Wind Energy: The Next Green Black Hole](#). Attendee Paul Driessen summarized what was discussed in his feature, [Big Wind Subsidies: Time to Terminate?](#)

*The New American* contacted Goldenberg about the situation. She responded, “Mr. Droz himself told me the memo was discussed at the meeting as did other participants. The article explicitly states Mr. Droz’s claim to have acted on his own.” Elsner did not respond to a request for comment.

“The fact that citizens had the nerve to get together to talk about how to get more science-based energy policies is really the target of these zealots,” charged Droz. “Independent citizens got together to talk about science-based energy policies. What a crime!”



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