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Scientists Criticize White House Stance on Climate Change Findings

By [CORNELIA DEAN](#)

Under its new Democratic chairman, [Representative Henry A. Waxman](#) of California, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform took on the Bush administration's handling of [climate change](#) science yesterday, and even the [Republicans](#) on the panel had little good to say about the administration's actions.

The subject of the hearing was accusations of administration interference with the work of government climate scientists. Almost to a person, Republicans on the panel introduced themselves by proclaiming their agreement that the earth's climate was warming and that the principal culprit was greenhouse gases generated by people and their machinery.

And when witnesses spoke in defense of the administration, it was often to say only that there were still some scientists who doubted that climate view or that the administration's approach was not unique.

"Cherry-picking" science to suit policy or political goals is at least as old as the Eisenhower administration, said Roger Pielke Jr., a professor in the Environmental Studies Program at the [University of Colorado](#). The committee itself is guilty of it, he added, pointing to a news release linking rising ocean temperatures to bigger and more frequent coastal storms, something about which there is still debate.

But the other witnesses spoke about how the administration had delayed, altered or watered down the findings of government scientists, the kind of thing they said they had not experienced in the Clinton administration.

Drew Shindell, a [NASA](#) scientist who said he was speaking as an individual, not for his agency, described research he and his colleagues did on ozone depletion and greenhouse gases over Antarctica.

Dr. Shindell said the findings helped explain recent cooling on the continent, a phenomenon cited by climate dissidents as challenging the mainstream view. And, he said, the findings suggested Antarctica might warm rapidly in the future, melting ice and sharply raising sea levels. By the time the administration had signed off on the work, he said, its importance had been played down and references to "rapid warming" had been deleted.

Another witness, Rick Piltz, said he resigned in protest in 2005 from his job with the federal Climate Change Science Program when he became convinced that the administration's goal was to "impede" the understanding of climate science among the public and even the Congress.

Part of his job, Mr. Piltz said, was to compile periodic assessments of government climate research for the Congress. "This report has essentially been made to vanish by the Bush administration," he said.

The fourth witness was Francesca Grifo, who directs the scientific integrity program of the [Union of Concerned Scientists](#), a private group that researches environmental, arms control and other issues.

Dr. Grifo's testimony drew largely from a report produced by the Union of Concerned Scientists and the Government Accountability Project, a private group that defends whistle-blowers. The report, made public yesterday, is based on a Union of Concerned Scientists survey of federal climate scientists and interviews and document searches by the Government Accountability Project. It says it is common for scientists to be pressured to eliminate references to climate change, for their work to be changed to misrepresent their findings, and for climate-related materials to disappear from Web sites.

Almost 60 percent of the scientists who responded to the survey said they had personally experienced such an incident in the last five years, the report says, and those who said their work was most closely related to climate change experienced the most interference. (Information about the report is available at www.ucsusa.org.)

Representative Darrell Issa, Republican of California, noted that a majority of scientists queried had not responded to the survey. Dr. Grifo said she attributed that to the "chilling effect" of administration actions. Anyway, she said, scores of scientists reported problems. "That number should be zero," she said.

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