2021 and Beyond: Scientific Priorities Moving Forward

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Ensuring scientific integrity in the Age of Trump

 Policies to protect government scientists must be defended

By Gretchen T. Goldman, Emily Berman, Michael Halpern, Charise Johnson, Yogin Kothari, Genna Reed, Andrew A. Rosenberg

With the new Donald J. Trump Administration comes uncertainty in the role that science will play in the U.S. federal government. Early indications that the Administration plans to distort or disregard science and evidence, coupled with the chaos and confusion occurring within federal agencies, now imperil the weapons to ensuring the safety of food and household products.

Americans still hold science in high regard, which makes it vulnerable to political interference. All modern presidents—both Republicans and Democrats—have politicized science in some way (3). President Barack Obama, for example, clashed with scientists on ozone pollution and emergency contraception—both decisions statutorily mandated to be based on science. But government experts in the George W. Bush Administration found their work suppressed and distorted at all steps in the

UCS worked with anonymous whistle-blowers to reveal political interference in science, resulting in the resignation of high-ranking administration appointees and

Characterizing Science’s Challenges
Percent of Science Advisory Committees That Failed to Meet as Often as Their Charters Directed

- FDA: 70%
- EPA: 70%
- DOI: 66%
- DOE: 54%
- CDC: 50%
Vacancies in Scientific Leadership Positions in Three Administrations

- George W. Bush: 68 appointed, 3 vacant
- Barack Obama: 79 appointed, 0 vacant
- Donald Trump: 44 appointed, 39 vacant
160+ Attacks on Federal Science Since 2017
160+ Attacks on Federal Science Since 2017

- Sidelining Science Advisory Committees
- Restrictions on Conference Attendance
- Rolling Back Data Collection or Data Accessibility
- Politicization of Grants and Funding
- Studies Halted, Edited, or Suppressed
- Anti-Science Rules/Regulations/Orders
- Censorship
Unprecedented Losses of Scientific Integrity

• “the Trump administration’s violations of scientific integrity are largely a continuation and escalation of patterns built up over the past seven decades…

• While many of the Trump administration’s actions have origins in the work of prior administrations, others fit with the ‘unprecedented’ narrative, including the uniquely open disregard for the conclusions of its own scientists.”

“In the past year, I have noticed workforce reductions at my agency, due to staff departures, retirements and/or hiring freezes”
Progress On Federal Scientific Integrity
Conditions that lead to a loss of scientific integrity

- Lack of clear and consistent policies
- Unsupportive or hostile work environment
- Ineffective or absent leadership
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of accountability
- Undue influence of political, financial, or ideological forces
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“My agency adheres to its scientific integrity policy.”
Priorities for 2021: Strengthening Science in Decisionmaking
2021 Priorities: Recommendations for a Presidential Administration

- Promoting science-based decisionmaking
- Strengthening scientific integrity
- Ensuring transparency
- Addressing conflicts of interest
- Safeguarding government scientists
- Fostering public participation
2021 Priorities: Recommendations for Key Topics at Agencies

- Advancing Science in Decisionmaking
- Strengthening Scientific Integrity
- Promoting Public Participation
- Addressing Conflicts of Interest
- Prioritizing Justice and Equity

[Link to the roadmap page on ucsusa.org]
2021 Priorities: Recommendations for Select Federal Science Agencies

Office of Science and Technology Policy

ucsusa.org/resources/roadmap-science-decisionmaking
2021 Priorities: Strengthening Scientific Integrity Policies

The Scientific Integrity Roadmap
Recommendations for 2021 and Beyond for Building Up Science across the Federal Government

Every day, the US government uses science to shape decisions affecting people across the nation. The best of these science-informed policies rely on a basic principle: that science is independent and impartial. However, actors on both sides of the aisle have long attempted to politicize science (Berman and Carter 2018). Such actions threaten the nation’s health, safety, and environment, with the most detrimental impacts often being felt by the most vulnerable and marginalized people in our nation (Desikan et al. 2019; Carter et al. 2019).

Until Congress passes and the president signs legislation codifying scientific integrity, federal agencies bear twin responsibilities:

- Creating policies that strengthen protections for federal science and scientists; and
- Ensuring that all federal employees fully implement and adhere to scientific integrity policies (US Congress 2019; Carter, Goldman, and Johnson 2018).

To ensure a robust scientific integrity infrastructure throughout the federal government, the leaders and scientific integrity officials of federal science agen-
2021 Priorities: Strengthening Scientific Integrity Policies

• Establish and empower scientific integrity officials
• Train all workers on rights and responsibilities
• Ensure open and accurate communication through media and social media
• Enforce clearance policies that promote scientific independence
• Prevent interference in data collection and research funding
• Provide safe procedures to report and investigation violations

Rebuilding Agency Capacity
To amend the America COMPETES Act to establish certain scientific integrity policies for Federal agencies that fund, conduct, or oversee scientific research, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Scientific Integrity Act”.

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—
Scientists Are Stepping Up

Scientists gather in 'unprecedented' rebuke to EPA

Sean Reilly, E&E News reporter · Published: Thursday, October 10, 2019