

# Bush Administration Manipulations of the Science

Here are the details of the ways in which the Bush Administration has actively worked to keep the public poorly informed on the state of scientific knowledge about climate change.

*A. A report by the US House of Representatives committee on oversight and government reform from December of 2007*

1. “CONCLUSION: The Committee’s 16-month investigation reveals a systematic White House effort to censor climate scientists by controlling their access to the press and editing testimony to Congress. The White House was particularly active in stifling discussions of the link between increased hurricane intensity and global warming. The White House also sought to minimize the significance and certainty of climate change by extensively editing government climate change reports. Other actions taken by the White House involved editing EPA legal opinions and op-eds on climate change.” [full report](#)

*B. Atmosphere of Pressure: Political Interference in Federal Climate Science, issued by The Union of Concerned Scientists and The Government Accountability Project in February 2007 undertook independent investigations of federal climate science. UCS mailed a questionnaire to more than 1,600 climate scientists at seven federal agencies to gauge the extent to which politics was playing a role in scientists’ research, conducted 40 in-depth interviews with federal climate scientists and other officials and analyzed thousands of pages of government documents, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and inside sources, regarding agency media policies and congressional communications. They found:*

1. Nearly half of all respondents (46 percent of all respondents to the question) perceived or personally experienced pressure to eliminate the words “climate change,” “global warming,” or other similar terms from a variety of communications.
2. Two in five (43 percent) perceived or personally experienced changes or edits during review that changed the meaning of scientific findings.
3. Nearly half (46 percent) perceived or personally experienced new or unusual administrative requirements that impair climate related work.
4. One-quarter (25 percent) perceived or personally experienced situations in which scientists have actively objected to, resigned from, or removed themselves from a project because of pressure to change scientific findings.
5. Asked to quantify the number of incidents of interference of all types, 150 scientists (58 percent) said they had *personally experienced* one or more such incidents within the past five years, for a total of *at least* 435 incidents of political interference. [link](#)

*C. A 2003 report in the New York Times describing an incident where the White House insisted on changing the section of the State of the Environment Report dealing with global warming so*

*drastically that the scientists at the EPA decided to simply delete that section of the report because they did not want to damage the credibility of the EPA by issuing a report which did not fit with the scientific evidence. In part, the Times article says:*

1. “Among the deletions were conclusions about the likely human contribution to warming from a 2001 report on climate by the National Research Council that the White House had commissioned and that President Bush had endorsed in speeches that year. White House officials also deleted a reference to a 1999 study showing that global temperatures had risen sharply in the previous decade compared with the last 1,000 years. In its place, administration officials added a reference to a new study, partly financed by the American Petroleum Institute, questioning that conclusion.”
2. “The Environmental Protection Agency is preparing to publish a draft report next week on the state of the environment, but after editing by the White House, a long section describing risks from rising global temperatures has been whittled to a few noncommittal paragraphs.”
3. “The editing eliminated references to many studies concluding that warming is at least partly caused by rising concentrations of smokestack and tail-pipe emissions and could threaten health and ecosystems.”
4. “An April 29 memorandum circulated among staff members said that after the changes by White House officials, the section on climate 'no longer accurately represents scientific consensus on climate change.'”
5. Another memorandum circulated at the same time said that the easiest course would be to accept the White House revisions but that to do so would taint the agency, because "E.P.A. will take responsibility and severe criticism from the science and environmental communities for poorly representing the science.”
6. The changes were mainly made by the Council on Environmental Quality, although the Office of Management and Budget was also involved, several E.P.A. officials said. It is the second time in a year that the White House has sought to play down global warming in official documents. Last September, an annual E.P.A. report on air pollution that for six years had contained a section on climate was released without one, and the decision to delete it was made by Bush administration appointees at the agency with White House approval.
7. In the "Global Issues" section of the draft returned by the White House to E.P.A. in April, an introductory sentence reading, "Climate change has global consequences for human health and the environment" was cut and replaced with a paragraph that starts: "The complexity of the Earth system and the interconnections among its components make it a scientific challenge to document change, diagnose its causes, and develop useful projections of how natural variability and human actions may affect the global environment in the future.”
8. Read the full article [here](#).  
Read the memo circulated at the EPA here [Appendix A, p. 34](#)

*Specific Examples:*

***D. Examples of Philip Cooney chief of staff for the White House Council on Environmental Quality***

## *alteration of reports.*

1. It is important to note that prior to his job altering reports at the Whitehouse, as the N. Y. Times reported, he was the "climate team leader" and a lobbyist at the American Petroleum Institute, the largest trade group representing the interests of the oil industry. He is a lawyer with a bachelor's degree in economics, he has no scientific training. Note the way his edits dovetail precisely with the [API's strategy](#) for dealing with Global Warming by focusing on promoting the idea of uncertainty in the science.
2. Cooney has a brilliant insight into language. His edits are often very subtle – inserting or replacing only a word or two, adding a “may”, a “could”, a “possible” – always with the result of making the text less definite and more speculative. It is interesting to contrast his edits with the language of the professionals he is editing. They live with the Global Warming science day in and day out, for them, warming is a fact, the potential of significant harm from warming is a fact, the information they use in their efforts to describe and address the problem is real, so they naturally talk about these things in definitive language. Cooney’s main purpose appears to be to police the definiteness of Global Warming reports.
3. [Here](#) is an example of his work published by the N. Y. Times. In the first example you can see he attempts to use what appears to be his usual technique of inserting modifiers that communicate uncertainty – in this case “would”. At some point he gives up on watering the paragraph down and simply deletes it.
4. A New York Times article from 2005 focuses on the editing of government reports on Global Warming by Mr. Cooney. The article says, in part:
  - “A White House official who once led the oil industry's fight against limits on greenhouse gases has repeatedly edited government climate reports in ways that play down links between such emissions and global warming, according to internal documents.”
  - “In handwritten notes on drafts of several reports issued in 2002 and 2003, the official, Philip A. Cooney, removed or adjusted descriptions of climate research that government scientists and their supervisors, including some senior Bush administration officials, had already approved. In many cases, the changes appeared in the final reports.”
  - “The dozens of changes, while sometimes as subtle as the insertion of the phrase "significant and fundamental" before the word "uncertainties," tend to produce an air of doubt about findings that most climate experts say are robust.”
  - In one instance in an October 2002 draft of a regularly published summary of government climate research, "Our Changing Planet," Mr. Cooney amplified the sense of uncertainty by adding the word "extremely" to this sentence: "The attribution of the causes of biological and ecological changes to climate change or variability is extremely difficult."
  - In a section on the need for research into how warming might change water availability and flooding, he crossed out a paragraph describing the projected reduction of mountain glaciers and snowpack. His note in the margins explained that this was "straying from research strategy into speculative findings/musings."
  - Rick S. Piltz, resigned in March as a senior associate in the office that coordinates government climate research. That office, now called the Climate Change Science Program, issued the documents that Mr. Cooney edited. ... Mr. Piltz wrote. "But I have

not seen a situation like the one that has developed under this administration during the past four years, in which politicization by the White House has fed back directly into the science program in such a way as to undermine the credibility and integrity of the program."

- A senior Environmental Protection Agency scientist who works on climate questions said ... the kinds of changes made by Mr. Cooney had damaged morale. "I have colleagues in other agencies who express the same view, that it has somewhat of a chilling effect and has created a sense of frustration," he said.
- Mr. Cooney's alterations can cause clear shifts in meaning. For example, a sentence in the October 2002 draft of "Our Changing Planet" originally read, "Many scientific observations indicate that the Earth is undergoing a period of relatively rapid change." In a neat, compact hand, Mr. Cooney modified the sentence to read, "Many scientific observations point to the conclusion that the Earth may be undergoing a period of relatively rapid change."
- Yesterday the scientific academies of 11 countries, including those of the United States and Britain, released a joint letter saying, "The scientific understanding of climate change is now sufficiently clear to justify nations taking prompt action."
- Read the full article [here](#).  
Read the congressional Testimony of Rick Piltz [here](#).

***E. In October of 2007 the director of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Dr. Julie Gerberding, presented testimony about potential health effects as a result of global warming. It was later revealed that six of the 12 pages of her opening statement were deleted by the White House.***

1. The associated press reported the following:
2. It turned out six pages of specific warnings about diseases that could spread because of global warming were edited out by the White House, as well as a line that the CDC considered this a serious public health concern that remained "largely unaddressed."
3. Earlier, a CDC official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the review process, told the AP that the original draft "was eviscerated" by "heavy-handed" changes in Washington. Read the red line version of the report [here](#).
4. Claims by the White House that some sections were removed because they did not, as Perino said, "comport with the science" in the U.N. panel's report were challenged ...
5. see the redacted topics side by side with the IPCC report [here](#).

Additional links and resources:

- The Union of Concerned Scientists explores this issue in detail [here](#).
- Two articles on the UCS report [here](#) and [here](#).