

The Washington Times

Cato Institute joins those refusing to cooperate with Senate Dems' climate-research probe

By Valerie Richardson

March 13, 2015

Add the Cato Institute to the list of those refusing to cooperate with the Senate Democrats' investigation into the funding of climate research.

John A. Allison, Cato Institute president and CEO, said a Friday letter to Democratic Sens. Barbara Boxer of California, Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts and Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island that the probe represents "an obvious attempt to chill research into the funding of public policy projects you don't like."

"Let's be honest: It surprises nobody that you disagree with Cato's views on climate change — among a host of issues — but that doesn't give you license to use the awesome power of the federal government to cow us or anybody else," Mr. Allison said.

Cato's refusal comes after Koch Industries and the Heartland Institute sent letters to the senators refusing to participate in the probe.

"Shame on you for abusing your public office in an attempt to silence public debate on such an important public policy topic," Heartland Institute president Joseph Bast wrote in his Tuesday letter. "I am grateful that a majority of members on the Committee on Environment and Public Works has strongly condemned your views and tactics."

Koch Industries attorney Mark V. Holden informed the senators in a March 5 letter that "we decline to participate in this endeavor and object to your apparent efforts to infringe upon and potentially stifle fundamental First Amendment activities."

The Senate Democrats sent letters dated Feb. 25 to 100 organizations, including fossil-fuel companies and trade associations such as the American Petroleum Institute, asking that they disclose their roles in climate-change research "designed to confuse the public and avoid taking action to cut carbon pollution."

The letters were also sent to think tanks involved in the climate-change debate aimed at finding whether their researchers "fail to disclose the sources of their funding in scientific publications or in testimony to legislators."

The deadline given for replies is April 3, but so far the senators have received enormous pushback from Republicans, academics and free-market advocates who view the investigation as an infringement on free speech.

The Providence [Rhode Island] Journal blasted the investigation in a March 8 editorial titled "For scientific freedom," prompting a reply posted Friday on the newspaper's website from Mr. Whitehouse.

"Asking how the climate denial 'scientists' are funded is an important part of uncovering whether this is legitimate science, or a climate replay of tobacco's fraudulent racketeering enterprise," Mr. Whitehouse said. "No one is saying the industry 'scientists' should be silenced, just that the public should know how they're paid."

The Senate Democrats' investigation coincides with one launched by Rep. Raul Grijalva, Arizona Democrat, who sent letters to universities asking for the funding sources of seven professors who have challenged the climate-change movement that rising carbon dioxide levels are causing extreme weather events.

The deadline given by Mr. Grijalva for responses from the universities is Monday.