



Leaked docs: Heartland Institute think tank pays climate contrarians very well

By [John Timmer](#)
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The scientific findings relevant to climate change generally appear in journals that the public will never look at. Instead, the public battle over the science and its policy implications often boils down to a battle between scientific societies like the AAAS and National Academies of Science and think tanks like the Cato Institute and Heartland Institute, which contest the scientific consensus. The Heartland has even set up a contrarian counterpart to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, called the NIPCC (for "nongovernmental" and "international," naturally).

Yesterday, a series of documents that allegedly originated from the Heartland were leaked to a prominent climate blog. The documents reveal that most of the funding for its climate activities come from a small range of very generous donors, and that big plans are afoot for 2012. If the Heartland has its way, it will fund the launch of a new website by meteorologist and climate skeptic Anthony Watts, and prepare a school curriculum intended to keep teachers from addressing climate science.

The documents include a detailed financial statement, which lists all the sources of income. The Heartland is generally antiregulatory (issues it tackled in the past include everything from smoking laws to telecom regulations), and its list of small donors reflects that. Time Warner Cable and AT&T both show up, as does Microsoft. Pharmaceutical and insurance companies also make appearances, along with the Koch brothers and GM. Combined, these large donors (\$10,000 or more) provided about three-quarters of the Heartland's \$4.5 million budget last year. A single anonymous donor provided about another \$1 million.

A glance through the documents (their authenticity has yet to be confirmed; see below), however, quickly reveals that this broad range of donors isn't involved in the Heartland's climate activities. The NIPCC reports, for example, consume about \$300,000 a year, but

all of that comes from two donors. Half of the cost of Watts' new website (which is rather pricey, at \$88,000) comes from a single donor. Another donor has pledged \$100,000 towards the school curriculum project.

The content of Watts' next project isn't made clear in the document (his current website is still focused on arguing about the accuracy of the temperature record long after the issues [have been reanalyzed to death](#)). But the description of the project that will target public schools is striking.

After complaining that "Principals and teachers are heavily biased toward the alarmist perspective," the document indicates that the \$100,000 will go to David Wojick, an engineer with a PhD in the philosophy of science. Wojick will be funded to address "the absence of educational material suitable for K-12 students on global warming that isn't alarmist or overtly political." To that end, he'll produce a set of modules that explicitly borrows the "teach the controversy" strategy, with each module dedicated to terming different aspects of climate change controversial—humanity's involvement, the accuracy of climate models, the role of CO₂ as a pollutant, etc.

This strategy is just as cynical as it sounds. Most of these topics *aren't* scientific controversies, and one document explicitly notes that the modules aren't focused on enabling teachers to handle climate science better; instead, Heartland hopes to *dissuade them from teaching it at all*. "Effort will focus on providing curriculum that shows that the topic of climate change is controversial and uncertain—two key points that are effective at dissuading teachers from teaching science."

Wojick isn't the only individual who will be paid well for his role in contesting climate science. Craig Idso, a former coal lobbyist who now helps manage the NIPCC, is getting \$11,600 per month for doing so. Fred Singer, a former scientist who often writes editorials that contest the scientific consensus, gets \$5,000 a month. A number of others, some still in academia, receive smaller amounts.

Heartland also claims to be able to mobilize less-formal means of contesting the scientific community. It says it coordinates its work with Watts, along with "other groups capable of rapidly mobilizing responses to new scientific findings, news stories, or unfavorable blog posts." It has also used Forbes blogs (one of its senior fellows has a regular column there) to get its message out. However, its love affair with Forbes is apparently on the rocks, since, "they have begun to allow high-profile climate scientists (such as [The Pacific Institute's Peter] Gleick) to post warmist science essays that counter our own."

Some of these documents are focused on fundraising, and thus might be the product of a bit of wishful thinking. Still, they make the Institute's strategic vision pretty clear, and many of the fundraising details and payments are required as part of tax documents. The most significant question is whether their entire content is authentic.

Many of the extensive details are so mundane that there's little doubt that the leaked documents were based on legitimate ones. The only question is whether some of the text

within them has been modified prior to the leak. The Heartland Institute hasn't yet commented publicly on the documents' authenticity, nor has its communications director returned our calls.