

Townhall

A Tribute to Patrick Michaels

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My first contact with Dr. Patrick Michaels was around 2006 or 2007, in the early, formative days of the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation. I had, over the previous two or three years, read at least five or six of the books he had by then written or edited on climate change, and I highly respected him as a careful, humble, yet confident scientist, fearlessly standing against "consensus" and insisting that hard evidence, not popularity contests, must prevail. He generously gave his time and expertise to explain various aspects of climate change to me, a non-scientist.

Around 2009, I visited him in his office, then at the Cato Institute. I had an idea about a simple way to estimate climate sensitivity (the amount that global average temperature would rise after a doubling of atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration, once the climate system reached equilibrium). He listened intently as I ran through my simple formula, lifted his eyebrows, and said something like, "Hmmm! I never thought of that!" And he took the idea seriously, saying it made sense. It brought an answer a bit lower but still close to what he thought, but it got there along a totally different path. (If you want to know what it was, you'll find it on page 7 of [A Renewed Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Examination of the Theology, Science, and Economics of Global Warming.](#))

Over the years since then, I've gone to him repeatedly for advice and explanations of difficult matters related to climate change. He was always friendly, respectful, and patient, explaining things in ways I as a scientific layman could understand. Most recently, he wrote an excellent chapter on climate models and the scientific method, for a book Dr. David Legates and I are editing, scheduled for release in the summer of 2023. It is a work of beauty, and we are deeply honored to include it in our book.

To my sorrow, Pat died unexpectedly Friday, July 15, at his home, at age 72. I always admired Pat's energy, the fact that he often wore red gym shoes with the suits and ties in which he spoke brilliantly for conferences, his pointed yet friendly sense of humor when he exposed silly thought on the part of those with whom he disagreed. He was a model of scientific integrity.

He worked energetically on behalf of climate realism, completing and submitting a review of the United States Global Change Research Program's latest report the day before he died, and then participating in a planning meeting with the CO2 Coalition. Dr. Michaels earned his A.B. in

biological science in 1971 and his S.M. in biology in 1975 from the University of Chicago, and his Ph.D. in ecological climatology from the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

He was a research professor of environmental sciences at the University of Virginia for 30 years, then director of the Center for the Study of Science at the Cato Institute, before becoming a Senior Fellow of the Competitive Enterprise Institute in 2019.

A past president of the American Association of State Climatologists and program chair of the Committee on Applied Climatology of the American Meteorological Society, Pat wrote or edited nine books on climate and its effects on mankind and nature. His articles were published in prestigious scientific journals including *Climate Research*, *Climate Change*, *Geophysical Research Letters*, *Journal of Climate*, *Nature*, and *Science*, and in other publications including the *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *USA Today*. He served as a contributing author and reviewer for the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

It was a privilege to know Pat, and on behalf the staff and associated scholars of the Cornwall Alliance, I extend my deep sympathy to his wife Rachel, his family, and his many friends. He will be sorely missed.