



## Attorney General Targets Conservative Groups over Climate Change Research

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Recently released documents revealed that dozens of conservative and libertarian organizations have been targeted by the attorney general of the U.S. Virgin Islands in an effort to silence climate change skeptics.

A subpoena issued in March by U.S. Virgin Islands Attorney General Claude Walker demanded all communication records between oil companies and political and policy organizations concerned with research or advocacy regarding climate change policies.

Organizations listed on the subpoena include well-known conservative and libertarian think tanks and policy research centers such as the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, the Federalist Society, the Hoover Institution, and the Reason Foundation.

Some of the targeted groups have already spoken out against Walker and the subpoena, with the Libertarian Competitive Enterprise Institute calling it “a blatant attempt to intimidate and harass an organization for advancing views that you oppose.”

Hans Von Spakovsky, a senior legal fellow at the Heritage Foundation, called the subpoena “a truly outrageous abuse of [the attorney general’s] authority and a misuse of the law.” He further condemned Walker of trying to exploit his power.

“This investigation is intended to silence and chill any opposition,” Von Spakovsky claimed. “It is disgraceful and contemptible behavior by public officials who are willing to exploit their power to achieve ideological ends.

Other legal experts have also condemned the subpoena and questioned whether it violates First Amendment free speech rights. University of Tennessee law professor Glenn Reynolds claimed that Attorney General Walker’s actions “looks like a concerted scheme to restrict the First Amendment free speech rights of people they don’t agree with.”

This isn't the first time that an attorney general has suggested taking action against climate change skeptics. In March, US Attorney General Loretta Lynch suggested prosecuting those guilty of climate change denial after Senator Sheldon Whitehouse compared climate change skepticism to questioning the danger of smoking cigarettes.