



## Trump Admin's CO2 Champion Intervened To Quash Testimony On Climate Crisis

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A top White House official who has championed the environmental benefits of carbon dioxide apparently intervened to quash scientific research on the coming climate crisis.

The Washington Post and New York Times reported Saturday that the Trump administration refused to allow written testimony from a State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research analyst about the “possibly catastrophic” effects of climate change to be entered into the congressional record last week.

One of the voices calling to reject that testimony, according to the Post, was the Trump administration's in-house climate science denier, National Security Council senior director William Happer.

A TPM analysis found that some comments from an unnamed Trump administration official in the margins of that written testimony repeat talking points and exact language Happer has used in paid testimony for an energy company and in fossil-fuel-funded think tanks.

The Times and Post both cited unnamed sources over the weekend to report that Happer — a 79-year-old physics PhD and star of the right-wing pro-carbon-dioxide movement — wrote extensive comments on analyst Rod Schoonover's drafted written testimony on the national security implications of climate change.

But the anonymous commenter practically outed himself in writing. On marked-up testimony published by the Times, the commenter, who identified only as being affiliated with the National Security Council, wrote at one point: “People used to talk about the degraded soil of my birthplace, India. Since I left India in 1948...”

That only describes one current NSC official: Happer, who was born in India and once said an interview that his family “returned to my father's home in Scotland” in 1948.

The NSC did not return TPM's request for comment.

Other comments left in the document's margins, many of which only tangentially relate to Schoonover's testimony, echoed paid work Happer has done for an energy company and fossil-fuel-funded think tanks.

For example, comment #30 on the written testimony cheers: “Agriculture and forestry yields are steadily increasing due to the beneficial effects of more CO2.”

Though numerous climate scientists have discounted this argument, a favorite of Happer’s, by pointing out that the negative effects of more CO2 in the atmosphere outweigh any positives in plant growth, Happer used these same words in testimony paid for by the coal company Peabody Energy.

Happer told the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in 2015, speaking as an expert witness for Peabody: “The economic models also greatly underestimate the very beneficial effects of more CO2 on agriculture.”

Later that year, Happer revealed to undercover Greenpeace activists posing as fossil fuel representatives that Peabody Energy paid his group, the CO2 Coalition, \$8,000 for that testimony.

There are more examples of crossover from fossil-fuel-funded work to the National Security Council comments.

Comment #16 asserts that computer models “have predicted far more warming than has been observed.”

Happer has used these same words in an interview with the website TheBestSchools.org, which was subsequently re-published by the notoriously anti-climate-science Heartland Institute and the libertarian Cato Institute, both of which have ties to Happer.

A similar line, about models that “have predicted several hundred per cent more warming than has actually been observed over the past 10 to 20 years,” appears twice in Happer’s Peabody-funded testimony.

Contrary to that testimony, the Yale Climate Connections reported in a 2017 analysis of the history of temperature modeling: “While some models projected less warming than we’ve experienced and some projected more, all showed surface temperature increases between 1970 and 2016 that were not too far off from what actually occurred, particularly when differences in assumed future emissions are taken into account.”

Comment #21 claims that CO2 is “substantially increasing” vegetation, citing “satellite observations of global greening due to the relative modest increases of CO2 that have occurred over the past fifty years.”

Happer’s Peabody-funded testimony likewise refers to “a very pronounced ‘greening’ of the Earth” resulting from a “modest increase” in CO2. And the CO2 Coalition, which Happer founded with ex-American Petroleum Institute COO William O’Keefe as a platform for anti-climate-science material, has published extensively on the beneficial effects of CO2 emissions on “global greening.”

The UC Santa Cruz environmental sciences professor whose study of “global greening” was celebrated by the pro-CO2 lobby, Dr. J. Elliot Campbell, told The New York Times in July: “The driving factor [in increased agricultural production] has to be the fertilizers, the seed varieties, the irrigation.” He added: ““Plants are quietly scrubbing the air of one China’s worth of carbon.

What frightens me is knowing this can't go on forever... If respiration catches up with photosynthesis, this huge carbon reservoir could spill back into our air."

The pushback against Schoonover's testimony is hardly the first time the Trump administration has echoed the fossil fuel industry's talking points. A few weeks after President Trump's inauguration, for example, a White House statement lifted passages word-for-word from an ExxonMobil press release.

Schoonover declined to comment and directed TPM to the State Department, which referred questions to the White House. A spokesperson there told TPM: "The administration does not comment on its internal policy review." A White House legislative affairs staffer separately told the Times that Schoonover's testimony didn't "reflect the coordinated [intelligence community] position, or the administration's position."