



Buoyed by Trump, the Climate Change Counter-Movement Gains Momentum

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On April 28, the Trump administration took down the vast majority of the EPA's Climate Change Website, including pages for: Basic Info, Causes of Climate Change, Future of Climate Change, Science, Impacts, Extreme Weather, Adapting, Reducing Emissions, What EPA is Doing, and What You Can do. What is the authority for this administration, under the guise of "updating this administration's priorities," to erase 20 years of climate science from our national EPA website? How can politicians, in three or four short months, decide that a generation of climate science is invalid? What gives them this authority?

The answers to these questions are closely tied to almost a billion dollars in annual funding by ultra-conservative policy institutes, according to research from Drexel and Stanford. It has been labelled the climate change counter-movement (CCCM.) We all know what the CCCM is, and in 2013 academic publishing, Professor Robert Brulle defined this phenomenon and evaluated its purpose and budget. From this peer reviewed work:

The climate change counter-movement has had a real political and ecological impact on the failure of the world to act on the issue of global warming.... Like a play on Broadway, the counter-movement has stars in the spotlight -- often prominent contrarian scientists or conservative politicians -- but behind the stars is an organizational structure of directors, script writers and producers, in the form of conservative foundations. If you want to understand what's driving this movement, you have to look at what's going on behind the scenes.

Looking at what is going on behind the scenes is what Brulle, professor of sociology and environmental science at Drexler University, published in his paper, "Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of U.S. climate change counter-movement organizations," December 21, 2013. Brulle did this research while on a year-long stay at Stanford.

Brulle says the movement began in 1989, coincident with the formation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). This work looks at 118 CCCM organizations funded by 140 foundations that have been identified in the academic literature as participating in the climate

change counter-movement. Internal Revenue Service records for 91 Conservative foundations and think tanks funded by 140 foundations were evaluated.

The Trump administration showed its climate change colors once again when they took down significant portions of the EPA's Climate Change Website on the 28th of April. Will it come back like so many things Trumpian already, or is this our future? (Image: Bruce Melton)

The funding comes from: American Enterprise Institute -- 16 percent, Heritage Foundation -- 14 percent, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace -- 8 percent, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research -- 6 percent, Cato Institute -- 5 percent, Hudson Institute -- 5.5 percent, Atlas Economic Research Foundation [now Atlas Network] -- 4 percent, Americans for Prosperity -- 4 percent, Heartland Institute -- 3 percent, Reason Institute -- 3 percent, Media Research Center -- 3 percent, Mercatus Center -- 3 percent, National Center for Policy Analysis -- 3 percent, Competitive Enterprise Institute -- 3 percent, and on into the night.

At least \$7 billion was identified as revenues to these organizations from 2003 to 2010, or about \$900 million annually. This money represents total revenue for these organizations. It funds their entire platforms of tax cuts for the wealthy, right to life, reduced government spending, etc., and very important to how this money is spent -- it funds elected officials' campaigns and other "informational campaigns" that support the entire platform. In other words, the entire \$900 million annually goes towards the implementation of the entire platform, and climate change is a fundamental piece of this pie.

A few quotes from this paper emphasize the dramatic nature of what this funding does:

"This counter-movement involves a large number of organizations, including conservative think tanks, advocacy groups, trade associations and conservative foundations, with strong links to sympathetic media outlets and conservative politicians."

"A well organized CCCM ... played a major role in confounding public understanding of climate science, but also successfully delayed meaningful government policy actions to address the issue."

"It is without question that conservative foundations play a major role in the creation and maintenance of the CCCM. All of the available information illustrates strong links between these foundations and organizations in the CCCM, even despite efforts ... to conceal these funding flows."

Today, the total platform of these conservative think tanks and policy institutes has overwhelmed the behavior of our citizenry to the point that their propaganda has convinced a majority that their counsel is valid. Even though a vast majority believe climate change is real, and a majority believe it is caused by man, overwhelmingly, 58 percent say that it is not a serious threat according to Gallup's most recent polling.

Even more telling though is the fact that climate change has completely fallen off the list of Americans' most important priorities: a May 2016 Gallup poll showing 2 percent of the US public believes "The Environment/Pollution" is the most important priority. In November 2015 the Pew Research Center said that only China and the Middle East are less concerned about climate change than the US.

But relative to the past, there is a bit of good news concerning climate change awareness. Last summer, the Guardian asked readers across all 50 US states "to identify the one issue that affects your life you wish the presidential candidates were discussing more." The Guardian's findings from 1,385 respondents was "Resoundingly, the largest group of participants pointed to climate change." Buried in the data though, this group represents only 20 percent of those polled.

With an issue that has so universally been labelled as the single most important issue of our time, it is clear that a massive campaign of disinformation is now in existence in which doubt is cast upon even the most well-evidenced scientific findings regarding climate.

The Trump administration embodies the climate change counter-movement. It has received its mandate from powerful corporations and lobbies, which have legitimized their counter movement through the psychological manipulation of the US public. The climate disinformation campaign has led to a widespread distrust of climate scientists where none should be. Brulle states:

To accomplish this goal in the face of massive scientific evidence of anthropogenic climate change has meant the development of an active campaign to manipulate and mislead the public over the nature of climate science and the threat posed by climate change.

By simply not advancing the platform of climate pollution reform, the Trump administration shows collusion with the CCCM. By reversing climate reform policy, this new administration would prove it is the ringleader of the CCCM.