

DAILY KOS

Fossil Fuel Spokesperson Pat Michaels Died Last Week, Deniers Not Quite Sure When

July 19th, 2022

It's never a good look to go dancing on a grave, so please forgive any subtextual glee you may pick up on here as we report the bad-for-his-family-good-for-everyone-else news that career climate disinformation peddler Dr. Patrick J. Michaels died last week.

It would be hard to understate how much time and energy Michaels devoted to disinformation over the past thirty years. While his one-time guess, live on CNN, that "40 percent" of his funding came from the fossil fuel industry remains a highlight of everything you need to know, he has some of the lengthiest [Sourcewatch](#) and [DeSmog](#) entries we've ever seen, with even more [primary documents over at ClimateFiles](#) that are [put into a fun "30 years of climate denial" slideshow](#) at the Climate Investigations Center.\

From his work as a "member scientist" and "individual supporter" [with a Big Tobacco front group](#) in the '90s to his own New Hope Environmental Services consulting company that [produced climate disinformation for fossil fuel funders](#), to his work as [the Koch's climatologist](#) at the Cato Institute and then CEI and the CO2 Coalition, [Michaels' career was one of turning polluter paychecks into propaganda](#).

Michaels leaves behind a wife, Rachel Schwartz, who only appears online in connection to Pat in [his Wiki bio that notes](#) they were married in 2010, and [in his 2011 book](#) in which he refers to her as "my dear friend" in a sentence before spending a paragraph dedicating the book to Chip Knappenberger, his collaborator and "general savior for 20 years."

Michaels closed his acknowledgment in [his 2011 book](#) by saying that "when the history of the global warming mess is written [his collaborator, Chip Knappenberger] will come out big," reading now like a suggestion that Chip might carry on the torch. But [since Michaels quit and Cato shut down their climate disinfo research center](#) in 2019, it seems Chip couldn't or chose not to get a new job in the field, so Michaels is probably wrong about that, in addition to everything else wrong with the book *Climate Coup: Global Warming's Invasion of Our Government and Our Lives*.

More recently, Pat Michaels appeared [in the 2022 Frontline documentary](#) on Big Oil's disinfo defending his funding, claiming that he "was using *them*," because "Can you imagine somebody giving you a little bit of money to say, 'Write whatever you want every two weeks'? We had a blast doing that. We weren't doing what we were told; we were doing what we wanted.

Apparently he expected us to believe it was merely coincidence that what he wanted to say was exactly what the industry wanted to hear. (Alex Epstein uses the same excuse for his petro-propaganda, so worry not, the industry's messaging will live on!)

Pat Michaels *also* appeared in the 2012 Frontline documentary on Big Oil's production of a "Climate of Doubt," delivering the tired climate disinformation talking point that "the oft-reported mantra in Washington, quote, 'The science is settled,' is not true at all."

A quote that summarizes his life's work, denying the reality that fossil fuels cause dangerous climate change.

As of yesterday, Monday the 18th, the CO2 Coalition, where Michaels was a Senior Fellow, made a point of "noting that it is unclear still if Dr. Michaels died on the 15th, 14th, or 13th of July 2022" in their obituary, while Cato just said he died "last week." But a post from the CO2 Coalition published two days earlier, on Saturday, read like he died on the 16th. As of Monday afternoon, Wikipedia listed his death as July 16, 2022 in the intro text, but July 15, 2022 in the sidebar. As of Tuesday morning, Wiki had settled on the 16th, whereas the CO2Coalition post that had said the 16th was edited sometime between Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning to say the 15th instead.

In a fitting fashion to a man whose career was dedicated to casting doubt on reality, even the day of his death is apparently not settled science.