



Secretary Perry, don't fight science

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Last week, I came across a puzzling tweet from the Department of Energy's press team: an op-ed titled "In the fight between Rick Perry and climate scientists — He's winning" by Ross McKittrick, a scholar at the right-wing Cato Institute.

As Secretary Perry should know, the DOE portfolio reaches far beyond energy. The Office of Science is the largest funder of basic physical science research in the world (for now). The DOE hosts 17 national laboratories and supports research at over 300 universities. DOE's labs alone employ nearly 60,000 scientists. At Perry's confirmation hearing, he vowed to fight for the scientists who work for him. Now his DOE press team is endorsing their attackers on Twitter.

Mr. McKittrick alleges that scientific institutions have become biased and politicized on "the climate issue." In reality, they are victims of politicization of basic facts, evidenced by his own writing. For example, he claims the American Meteorological Society provided evidence of their bias by writing a letter of protest to Perry for publicly denouncing the fact that climate change is caused by carbon dioxide, while staying silent when President Obama "falsely" stated that 97 percent of scientists agree that climate change is caused by humans.

These statements from McKittrick are misleading. The statistic 97 percent comes from a peer-reviewed study, which analyzed peer-reviewed climate change research and found that over 97 percent of conclusions supported that climate change was caused by humans at least in some part. Our national defense agencies have asserted that climate change is a real national security threat.

McKittrick also claims that the American Meteorological Society's own membership survey "showed nearly half of its members doubted either that climate change was even happening or that CO₂ played a dominant role." This statement is false, taking statistics out of context. The conclusion of the report states that "93% of actively publishing climate scientists indicated they are convinced that humans have contributed to global warming."

Fact checking an extreme opinion piece before endorsing is important. The exhausted right-wing dialogue that Ross McKittrick provides in his op-ed is misleading, dishonest and dangerous. More concerning is that the DOE itself seems to support the War on Science, and publicly endorsing opinion pieces is inappropriate and borderline illegal for executive branch agencies.

