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A Pope of climate denial

There's broad agreement among scientists nowadays that global warming is real and caused in large part by human activities like burning fossil fuels and cutting down forests.

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For example, a [survey](#) by university researchers published last year in EOS, the journal of the American Geophysical Union, found that 90 percent of earth scientists agree that mean global temperatures have generally risen since the 1800s, and 82 percent think human activity contributes significantly. As respondents' level of specialization in climate science increased, so did their confidence in human-caused global warming, with climate change agreeing most strongly. That broad agreement is reflected in the work of organizations including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Meteorological Society and the National Academy of Sciences all refer to a climate science "consensus."

But earlier this month, Rasmussen released a [poll](#) that asked likely U.S. voters their thoughts on various energy issues including global warming. While the majority of voters -- 59 percent -- think climate change is a serious issue, the number has dropped since last year. At the same time, the survey found that only 39 percent of voters think human activity is the main contributor to the earth's warming.

So why all the confusion among the public? A big reason is a long-lived and generously funded [public relations campaign](#) by corporations, business leaders and others -- many with a financial interest in fossil-fuel industries -- to make it seem like there's less of a consensus about human-caused climate change than there really is.

Two key players in this well-funded campaign have been David and Charles Koch, the billionaire brothers behind [Koch Industries](#), a Kansas-based oil conglomerate and the second-largest privately held company in the United States. The Kochs have landed in the public spotlight lately thanks to a [New Yorker profile](#) that detailed their efforts to sow doubt about global warming as well as reports by the [New York Times](#) and [Think Progress](#) about the brothers' efforts to coordinate conservative political initiatives, including an assault on what they call "climate change alarmism."

But the Kochs aren't the only ones attacking prevailing climate science. An investigation by [Facing South](#) finds that they have a valuable ally in North Carolina: the lesser-known but [influential conservative benefactor](#) Art Pope.

Pope has close ties to the Kochs as [one of four national directors](#) of the Koch-founded political advocacy group Americans for Prosperity; he is also the [second-largest institutional funder](#) of the Americans for Prosperity Foundation.

In addition, Pope is a director and board chair of a [family foundation](#) that has steered millions to conservative think tanks in North Carolina and nationally that have worked closely with the Koch network to manufacture doubt about global warming.

In North Carolina, the climate skeptics that benefit from Pope's fortune haven't gained much traction in the state legislature. But that could change if Pope's strategy pays off this election year: He has begun [funneling money](#) to ostensibly nonpartisan nonprofits that use it to run [attack ads](#), and among the targeted politicians are two long-time legislative leaders who've played a key role in addressing climate change in the state.

Keeping up with the Kochs

For over a decade, the Koch brothers have spent a considerable chunk of their \$21.5 billion fortunes financing doubt about climate science.

A [report released earlier this year](#) by [Greenpeace](#) documented how the Kochs have contributed more than \$48.5 million from 1997 to 2008 toward funding what the environmental group refers to as the "climate denial machine" -- a network of several dozen think tanks dedicated to sowing doubt about global warming. The Kochs' money has flowed largely through the brothers'



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charitable family foundations: the Charles G. Koch Foundation, the David H. Koch Foundation and the Claude R. Lambe Charitable Foundation.

KOCH AND POPE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE "CLIMATE DENIAL MACHINE"

Recipient Organization	\$ received 1997-2008	
	From Kochs	From Pope
Mercatus Center	9,874,500	245,000
Citizens for a Sound Economy/Freedomtowers	6,510,375	750,000
Cato Institute	5,276,400	750,500
Americans for Prosperity Foundation	5,176,500	1,107,500
Institute for Humane Studies	3,922,457	1,200,000
Heritage Foundation	3,358,000	760,000
Federist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies	1,760,700	452,000
The Reason Foundation	1,706,200	375,000
Foundation for Research on Economics and the Environment	1,460,000	0
Manhattan Institute	1,325,000	37,000
Washington Legal Foundation	1,235,000	185,000
Public Research Institute for Public Policy	1,100,000	70,000
Capital Research Center	640,000	0
National Center for Policy Analysis	570,000	96,000
Tax Foundation	525,000	78,000
Competitive Enterprise Institute	471,420	105,000
American Legislative Exchange Council	406,000	0
Texas Public Policy Foundation	393,999	0
Independent Women's Forum	335,000	18,000
Independence Institute	291,000	0
George C. Marshall Institute	240,000	2,000
Institute for Energy Research	235,000	0
American Council for Capital Formation	225,000	10,000
Fraser Institute	175,000	3,000
Frontiers of Freedom	174,500	0
Property and Environment Research Center	174,500	0
American Enterprise Institute	150,000	15,500
American Council on Science and Health	125,000	1,000
Atlas Economic Research Foundation	122,300	730,000
Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change	85,000	0
John Locke Foundation	85,000	16,900,170
Goldwater Institute	75,000	0
Madison Center for Public Policy	65,000	5,500
Americans for Tax Reform	60,000	112,500
Center for the Study of Market Processes	50,000	0
State Policy Network	39,000	20,000
National Taxpayers Union Foundation	32,500	36,000
Heartland Institute	30,000	50,000
Media Research Center	15,005	0
TOTAL	48,510,856	24,116,670

Chart: Institute for Southern Studies, October 2010. Sources: "Koch Industries: Secretly Funding the Climate Denial Machine," Greenpeace, 2010, and Internal Revenue Service.

Facing South's analysis of tax return data ([click on chart at left for a larger version](#)) finds that Art Pope's family foundation has also made very generous contributions to this same network of climate denial groups over that same period -- more than \$24.1 million in all.

The generosity of the Pope Foundation is especially remarkable when you consider that his fortune is presumably nowhere near as large as the Kochs'. While the Koch brothers landed in fifth place on Forbes' list of the 400 richest Americans released last month, Pope -- who made his millions after inheriting his father's

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POLICY AND RESEARCH

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Center for Responsive Politics
Center for Rural Strategies
Economic Policy Institute
Highlander Research and Education Center
Progressive States Network
SouthNow

discount retail chain -- did not make the list at all.

The largest chunk of money that Pope contributed to the climate denial network went to the John Locke Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit think tank based in Raleigh, N.C. that was created in 1990 to promote the idea of limited government. Not only does Pope provide 80 percent of the organization's funding -- a striking \$16.9 million from 1997 to 2008 alone -- he also sits on its board of directors, which gives him considerable power in managing the organization's operations and policies.

The John Locke Foundation, in turn, has been one of the most outspoken voices of climate denial in North Carolina -- working in concert with other groups funded by Koch and Pope to creation the illusion of disagreement about the fundamentals of climate science:

* In 2005, shortly after legislation addressing climate change was first introduced at the General Assembly, the foundation released a public policy statement titled "Global Warming Policy: NC Should Do Nothing," which claimed that climate science remains "unsettled."

* That same year, the Locke Foundation distributed to all members of the state legislature the Michael Crichton novel "State of Fear," a work of fiction that promoted the views of Dr. S. Fred Singer, a prominent climate skeptic. Singer has held positions with the Cato Institute, which was co-founded in 1977 by Charles Koch and is generously funded by the Kochs, and with other Koch-financed outfits including the American Council on Science and Health, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, Frontiers of Freedom, Heritage Foundation, Institute for Humane Studies and the National Center for Policy Analysis.

* In 2007, as North Carolina began working on ways to reduce the state's greenhouse gas emissions, it turned for technical assistance to the Center for Climate Strategies, a nonprofit group of scientists, engineers, business strategists and policy experts that has worked with governments in the U.S., Mexico and Canada on tackling climate change issues. In response, the Locke Foundation launched a series of attacks on the Center, charging that it was founded by an "environmental advocacy group known to take alarmist positions on global warming" -- when in truth it was founded by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, a business-friendly group whose directors have included representatives of Reliant Energy, Dow, and the Academy of Natural Sciences. At one point Locke teamed up with the Heartland Institute -- a climate-skeptic group that's been financed by the Kochs -- to hold a conference call during which Locke's research director accused the Center of peddling false assumptions like the idea that "CO2 emission reduction is the solution to global warming."

* Also in 2007, the Locke Foundation released a policy report titled "A North Carolina Citizen's Guide to Global Warming," assuring readers that the "alarming view" of global warming does not represent the scientific consensus. It went on to assert that "[m]ost of the greenhouse effect is natural and is due to water vapor naturally in the atmosphere, as well as natural levels of carbon dioxide (CO2), methane, and a few other greenhouse gases." The report was written by Joel Schwartz, who at the time was a visiting scholar at the Koch-funded American Enterprise Institute.

* In addition, Locke has questioned mainstream climate science through a series in the Carolina Journal, the foundation's monthly newspaper, and opinion pieces published by its staff in other outlets, like the 2006 American Spectator article in which Locke editor Paul Chesser accused Christian climate activists of "Biblical illiteracy" and warned that "God has some serious global warming of His own planned." It's also spread its message of doubt through speaking engagements by climate science skeptic Pat Michaels, a climatologist who left the University of Virginia under a cloud of controversy over his industry funding and contrarian views to become a fellow at the Koch-founded and funded Cato Institute, as well as through its Carolina Journal radio show, which has discussed topics like "the biases that help convince global warming

alarmists that their cause deserves so much attention."

The John Locke Foundation's misrepresentations of climate science continue today. Earlier this month, for example, one of the organization's [half-dozen blogs](#) featured a [post that declared](#) global warming a "pseudoscientific fraud" that has been "terribly discredited."

Changing the political climate

So far, this network of groups has not succeeded in blocking North Carolina's efforts to curb global warming pollution. In fact, the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, a nonprofit that promotes clean energy policy, [calls North Carolina](#) "one of the region's leaders, with a state commission on climate change and a budding policy roadmap that points the state in the right direction."

That roadmap was drawn by [Senate Bill 3](#), legislation passed in 2007 that made North Carolina the 29th state in the nation -- and the first in the Southeast -- to adopt a minimum requirement for the use of renewable energy sources by investor-owned electric utilities. The bill requires that 12.5 percent of all electricity sold in the state by 2020 must come from renewable sources or improved efficiency. It's a modest goal compared to other states' -- like New York's 29 percent by 2015 or California's 33 percent by 2020 -- and some environmental advocates have [called for raising it](#).

But the John Locke Foundation would like to do away with it altogether, according to the group's [2010 climate agenda](#). Here's that agenda in its entirety:

1. *Abandon all state attempts to fight global warming.*
2. *Repeal already adopted legislation such as SB3, which is raising energy costs and reducing employment opportunities in the state, which is already suffering from one of the highest unemployment rates in the country.*

This election year, Art Pope is also spending money on political advocacy to make this vision a reality. As [Facing South](#) has [reported](#), Pope's foundation is also a crucial backer of the Civitas Institute, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and its 501(c)(4) sister group, Civitas Action. Between 2005 and 2009, the Pope Foundation has accounted for about 99 percent of the Civitas Institute's foundation income. Pope was also a founder of Civitas Action, which has [raised nearly \\$265,000](#) since August -- more than 70 percent of that directly from Pope's company.

This month Civitas Action took its first step into election-year politics, [spending \\$5,750 on mailers](#) targeting North Carolina House Speaker Joe Hackney and Senate leader Marc Basnight, Democrats who've been supportive of efforts to address global warming. Hackney led the state's climate change commission for a time before appointing in his place Rep. Pricey Harrison (D), one of the legislature's strongest environmental advocates. Basnight, who represents the Outer Banks, has [talked about his concern](#) that global warming and associated sea rise could inundate the region and supports a move to cleaner energy sources. Frances De Luca, president of the Civitas Institute and the former state director of the North Carolina chapter of Americans for Prosperity, has said more mailers are planned.

So who are Hackney's and Basnight's challengers, and where do they stand on global warming?

Running against 15-term Hackney is Cathy Wright, a nursing instructor who's also worked as a [lobbyist for medical groups](#). She doesn't address climate change in her platform or talk about it on the campaign trail, and her campaign manager did not respond to Facing South's request for information about her position. But Wright does say she's a member of the [Conservative Women's Forum](#), which promotes a book [calling global warming a "scam"](#) and is [uniformly critical](#) of clean energy solutions from cap-and trade legislation to wind power to the promotion of compact-fluorescent light bulbs. Additionally, her campaign website [links directly](#) to both the John Locke Foundation and the Civitas Institute.

Meanwhile, Basnight's opponent is Hood Richardson, a retired minerals geologist and commissioner for Beaufort County, N.C. Unlike Wright, Richardson is not at all shy about telling voters what he thinks about global warming: He [calls it](#) a "problem that has since been debunked as based on faulty science." He also criticizes Basnight for helping create the state climate change commission, saying it will "severely harm businesses."

Who does Richardson cite as the source for his claims?

The John Locke Foundation.



By Sue Sturgis on October 26, 2010 9:48 AM

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