

# Waxman Seeks Details on Skeptic's Income

By [Kate Sheppard](#) | Wed Jan. 26, 2011 3:00 AM PST

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Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) may be back in the minority, but that also means he's back to the role of professional gadfly. He kicked off the 112th Congress on Monday with a [request](#) [1] to new Energy and Commerce Committee Chair Fred Upton (R-Mich.) to investigate whether a well-known climate skeptic lied to Congress on his CV.

The skeptic in question is Pat Michaels, a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute. Michaels, unlike many of the [kooky climate contrarians](#) [2] that Republicans often dig up to, actually has some bona fides. He has a PhD in ecological climatology and is a senior fellow in the School of Public Policy at George Mason University. And unlike some of his fellow skeptics, Michaels will acknowledge that the earth is warming—he just doesn't think it's that big of a deal, nor will he agree that human activity is the major contributing factor.

But Michaels is [loathe to admit](#) [3] how much of his income over the years has come from fossil fuel interests, despite evidence that he's taken quite a bit of it. In his letter to Upton on Monday, Waxman raises the question of whether Michaels "may have provided misleading information about the sources of his funding and his ties to industries opposed to regulation of emissions responsible for climate change" when he testified before the committee in February 2009.

In his [curriculum vitae](#) [4] (PDF) provided to the committee at that time, under the section "Financial Support (Over \$10,000)," Michaels listed \$4.2 million in income, attributing just 3 percent of it to industry sources—excluding several major industry sources that have been disclosed in the course of litigation, including New Hope Environmental Services, Intermountain Rural Electric Association (IREA), Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc., and the free-market think-tank the Heartland Institute.

Asked about whether he is funded by the oil industry in an appearance on CNN last August, Michaels first responded, "Not largely." He was then asked how much of his funding comes from oil interests, to which he replied, "I don't know, 40 percent." That, as Waxman writes, certainly doesn't match up with the CV he provided last year. (The statement was back in the news last week after a [mention in \*Politico\*](#) [5]. Waxman proposes that the committee call Michaels in for a meeting.

This reminds me of an interaction I had with Michaels last November, when he was asked to testify before the House Committee on Science and Technology as part of its [final hearing of the 111th Congress](#) [6]. I asked him, again, how much money he's taken from fossil fuel interests. "I don't take any taxpayer money," he responded. "It's a conscious decision. The country's \$14 trillion in debt and if anybody knows me they know that nobody's going to tell me what to say. End of story."

So I asked again about whether he would respond to the questions that have been raised about his legitimacy based on this funding. "It's very clear that nobody tells me what to do," he said, growing increasingly annoyed. "My answer is it's clear that nobody tells me what to do, so it doesn't matter. It's an irrelevancy. Thank you," he continued, before hurrying off.

I'm guessing that Upton won't be rushing to call Michaels in to clarify on this issue, but it's certainly worth keeping in mind as GOP leadership begins its efforts to undermine climate science in the coming months, as Michaels is one of their favorites.