



Donald Trump Has Finally Killed the Pro-Science Wing of the Republican Party

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December 9, 2016

National Review has a **story** carrying the promising headline, “No, Scott Pruitt at the EPA Will Not Be a Threat to the Planet.” A hopeful premise. Alas, the story, written by Ian Tuttle, proceeds to argue that Pruitt will not pose a threat to the planet because climate science is a giant hoax. The consensus of climate scientists that greenhouse-gas emissions lead to steadily rising temperatures, explains Tuttle, is merely an “ever-looming but never-arriving ‘climate change’ apocalypse, the most concrete indication of which appears to be — maybe — the occasional lean polar bear.” So never fear, things will be fine, as long as you’re pretty sure the field of climate science is a hoax.

Likewise, Patrick J. Michaels, who holds the morbidly ironic title of “*director of the Center for the Study of Science*” at the Cato Institute, **gloats** that “failing climate models” cooked up by corrupt scientists who “serve their best interests (and their employer-universities) by generating horror-show results that also generate more support and professional advancement” will now be discarded.

A few years ago, the Republican Party’s full embrace of pseudoscience was not inevitable. Or, at least, it was not complete. There were at least stirrings of acceptance of scientific reality — a 2007 *National Review* **cover story** urged conservatives to stop questioning the theory of anthropogenic climate change, and instead use cost-benefit tests as the basis for their opposition to limits on greenhouse-gas emissions. (Scientific certainty in the theory has only grown stronger since.)

And Republicans seemed to be moving toward acceptance not only of the science, but the need to reduce carbon emissions. **Newt Gingrich** advocated cap-and-trade in 2007, and Republican nominee John McCain did in 2008. Even after Republicans in Congress veered sharply rightward in 2009, in the face of the Obama administration’s efforts to enact the presumably bipartisan idea into law, the old GOP environmental establishment remained on his side. When Obama, facing legislative gridlock, used the Clean Air Act to advance his goals, former EPA administrators

from the **Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush** administrations endorsed Obama's plans.

But the Republican Party's flight away from empiricism, or intellectual seriousness of any kind, is accelerating under Trump. The total capitulation to pseudoscience is simply another indicator of a party that has left any sense of pragmatism far behind.