

Our View: Time to probe global warming collusion claims

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Wide Internet distribution of thousands of secret e-mails, documents and studies has lent credence to global warming skeptics' contention that climate data is being manipulated, evidence suppressed and efforts waged to blackball and harm the reputations of opponents of the theory that manmade greenhouse gas emissions endanger the planet.

"This is not a smoking gun," said global warming skeptic Pat Michaels, a climate scientist at the Cato Institute, "this is a mushroom cloud."

"This is what everyone feared," Michaels said. "Over the years, it has become increasingly difficult for anyone who does not view global warming as an end-of-the-world issue to publish papers. This isn't questionable practice, this is unethical."

It's time for these matters, particularly this new disturbing material, to be investigated in public view. Claims that global warming "science is settled" ring hollow in light of material either stolen from or leaked from the Climate Research Unit of the U.K.'s University of East Anglia late last week. As much as 200 megabytes of information from the research center flooded onto the Internet, including e-mail exchanges with American scientists. Countless scientists, bloggers and journalists are pouring over the material. East Anglia's research center bills itself as "one of the world's leading institutions concerned with the study of natural and anthropogenic climate change," and has developed data sets widely used in climate research, including the global temperature record used to monitor climate and statistical software packages and climate models.

Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., a leading global warming skeptic, called Monday for an investigation. In England, Lord Nigel Lawson, another leading global warming skeptic, also demanded an independent inquiry into whether data has been manipulated to strengthen the case for manmade global warming.

"Astonishingly, what appears, at least at first blush, to have emerged is that scientists have been manipulating the raw temperature figures to show a relentlessly rising global warming trend," said Lawson. He said the previously undisclosed material also appears to show records were concealed or destroyed to avoid Freedom of Information requests, and efforts were made to prevent opposing views from being published in scientific journals. The alleged "consensus" on global warming is fraudulent if it's based on suppression of alternative theories, particularly if the motive was to protect multimillion-dollar research grants.

Meanwhile, Congress considers economy-wrenching, cap-and-trade legislation and 192 nations prepare to gather next month in Copenhagen, Denmark, to consider similar worldwide binding agreements to curb greenhouse gases and redistribute billions of dollars. "It's disconcerting to realize that legislative actions this nation is preparing to take and which will cost trillions of dollars, are based upon a view of climate that has not been completely scientifically tested," said John Christy, a scientist at the University of Alabama at Huntsville.

It's time to put all the cards on the table and determine exactly what, if anything, is settled by the science, and whether or to what degree the game has been rigged up to now.