



Climate Hustle 2: Showcasing a Thinning Roster of Climate Science Deniers

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When written histories remember 2020 as the year that America's anti-science obsessions completed their evolution from dangerous to deadly, the premier of Climate Hustle 2: Rise of the Climate Monarchy will be deserving of at least a footnote. The film, produced by CFACT, the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow, and starring Climate Depot's Marc Morano, was originally set to be released on April 21, before the coronavirus pandemic shut down theaters and much of American life.

In the five months since, climate-fueled wildfires have torched the Western U.S., the World Meteorological Organization ran out of hurricane names in the overheated Atlantic, the Arctic ice cap contracted to a nearly unprecedented minimum, and polar scientists announced that Greenland's ice sheet has melted "past the point of no return."

Undeterred by these physical realities, tonight CFACT will release its paean to climate denial, pledging to "rock the climate change debate," a debate that has long been settled by the 97% or more of actively publishing climate scientists who agree that current warming trends are manmade.

Who is Funding CFACT's Climate Hustle?

The film is being released by CFACT, a free market organization with a history of taking corporate money to deploy its PR tactics against public interest and environmental advocates. When it launched in 1989, CFACT approached the Chemical Manufacturers Association for "corporate involvement and support." The CMA described CFACT at the time as being "established to fight the Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG) and Ralph Nader-type organizations."

Defending against allegations that the group is funded by fossil fuel interests, CFACT's Paul Driessen wrote this week that "CFACT has received no fossil fuel money for over a decade, and got only small amounts before that." This is plainly and demonstrably false.

For starters, CFACT received \$38,252 from Charles Koch's foundation and institute between 2014-2016. The Koch family's fortune is fueled by oil and tar sands refining and petrochemicals, among other carbon-based industrial business activities, which Driessen apparently doesn't understand is "fossil fuel money."

Also, bankruptcy filings for Murray Energy, the coal mining company, show a \$5,000 payment to CFACT in 2018.

This type of bald-faced deception is business-as-usual for CFACT. The group has also claimed that “Global temperatures have been virtually flat for about 18 years according to satellite data,” that “sea level rise rates have been steady for over a century, with recent deceleration” and that “polar bears are doing fine, with their numbers way up since the 1960s.” These statements are about as true as CFACT’s assertion that a check from a coal company is not “fossil fuel money.”

On top of Murray’s coal cash, CFACT received a total of \$7,855,387 from DonorsTrust (DT) between 2008 and 2017, and a total of \$395,000 from Donors Capital Fund (DCF) between 2005 and 2015. DonorsTrust and Donors Capital Fund redistribute donations to conservative groups while masking the identity of the original donors.

CFACT has not yet responded to DeSmog’s emailed request for clarification on Driessen’s comments and for comment on the true source of the funds it receives through Donors Trust and DCF.

Who is Marc Morano?

Morano, a “central cell of the climate-denial machine,” is one of the world’s most aggressive climate science deniers, known for his full contact approach to attacking individual scientists along with the scientific consensus. Morano has said that climate scientists deserve to be “publicly flogged,” and for years Morano made a habit of publishing the email addresses of climate scientists in governments and in academia. Many victims of this intimidation technique were subsequently harassed, and some received death threats.

Before joining CFACT in 2009, Morano worked for conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh and was a staffer for Senator James Inhofe, who famously said in Congress that “manmade global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people.”

In moments of candor, Morano has given away his game. In an interview for the Merchants of Doubt documentary, Morano said “I’m not a scientist but I do play one on TV occasionally. Okay, more than occasionally.”

Marc Morano’s COVID Science Denial

Morano has recently been playing a scientist on Twitter as well, openly flouting science-based warnings about the spread of the coronavirus that causes Covid-19. Morano has described himself as a “proud mask slacker” and routinely ridicules and undermines scientists’ advice for the public to wear masks and practice social distancing.

In April, Morano appeared alongside Heartland Institute President James Taylor in a CFACT webinar titled “Is the coronavirus lockdown the future environmentalists want?” During the talk, he questioned the scientific value of a stay-at-home policies and called for citizens to disobey lockdown orders (emphasis mine):

I think we have to acknowledge at a national level that lockdowns, there's no science to support essentially that they work. Especially, I can understand a flattening the curve or at least some kind of limited. Very limited. But you don't lockdown... We need to acknowledge that they were wrong and not allow future lockdowns. That's number one.

I'm going to advocate absolute breaking of the law tonight. If you have people going to the beach and getting arrested, it's easy for police to show up, arrest a few people or go to a park and arrest someone. But if people start showing up en masse to the beach, **the police can't arrest everyone.**

And if you start having owners of businesses start, and we're seeing this now, artists and other shops declaring themselves—tailor shops—declaring themselves nonessential, they're opening up. More of them do it, the police can't arrest everyone. This is my key thought. The Berlin Wall was not taken down because the East German government passed a law that said, let's remove the law. It came down because the people no longer gave their consent for a wall to be up. **So when the people no longer give their consent through lockdown, through this kind of mass civil disobedience, that's how you fight it. Not through calling your congressman or senator and complaining into a voicemail. You've got to act. And I think that's what has to happen here. Sorry. I'm calling for lawbreaking tonight.**

CDR Communciations: The Evangelical Climate Denying Filmmakers Behind Climate Hustle 2

The original Climate Hustle was directed and produced by Chris Rogers, President of CDR Communications, and a number of CDR staffers were involved in the making of the film. CDR is also listed on the Climate Hustle 2 website.

As [Graham Readfearn](#) first reported for [DeSmog](#), CDR Communications has produced a number of videos for the [Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation](#), an evangelical Christian group founded in 2006 by Calvin Beisner that [claims](#) environmentalism is “one of the greatest threats to society and the church today.” One video series was called “[Resisting the Green Dragon](#),” which claimed environmentalism was a “false religion” and warned that “most environmentalists want to greatly reduce the human population.” CDR’s connections to the Cornwall Alliance run even deeper. Rogers is also the chairman of CDR’s [The James Partnership](#), a “non-profit group that produces videos inspired by the New Testament’s Epistle of James,” and which has also [paid Beisner](#). CDR Communications, The James Partnership, and the Cornwall Alliance have [all shared the same mailing address](#).

Beisner appeared briefly in the original Climate Hustle, which [echoed many of the same themes and talking points](#) and included many of the same “experts” as the videos that CDR produced for the Cornwall Alliance.

Who’s Who in Climate Hustle 2?

While he hosted the predecessor on his own, Morano shares the screen in Climate Hustle 2 with narrator Kevin Sorbo, a Hollywood actor best known for his star turn as the titular role in the 1990s hit Hercules: The Legendary Journeys. Sorbo, who has no training in climate science, said in a [promotional interview](#) that “the ice caps are doing great, the polar bears are doing fine.” (According to the latest science, the ice caps are [not doing great](#) and polar bears are [not doing fine](#).)

Throughout the film, Sorbo and Morano speak with a number of the most familiar names in climate science denial—those few who fall outside of the 97% consensus—most of whom also appeared in the original Climate Hustle. These include:

- Dr. Judith Curry, who left academia in 2017 to focus fully on her private business, which she has admitted does receive funding from the fossil fuel industry.
- Patrick Moore, a Canadian nuclear power advocate and founder of a private PR company who describes himself as a founder of Greenpeace, a claim that the organization itself denies.
- Dr. Richard Lindzen, an “Expert” with the Heartland Institute, a member of the “Academic Advisory Council” of the Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF), and an advisor to the CO2 Coalition, a group promoting the benefits of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Formerly of the Cato Institute, before they cut their climate science program, Lindzen has described the 97% consensus among climate scientists as “propaganda.”
- Dr. Ivar Giaever, a physicist with no academic climate credentials who resigned from the American Physical Society when he disagreed with their stance on global warming as occurring and “incontrovertible.”
- Dr. Tim Ball, a retired Canadian professor and former member of President Trump's transition team, who also claims falsely to be Canada's first climatology PhD. Ball was recently found guilty of libel by a Canadian Court of Appeals over false statements in a 9-year-old attack against prominent Canadian climate scientist (and outgoing BC Green Party leader), Dr. Andrew Weaver.
- Alex Epstein of the for-profit Center for Industrial Progress has turned a Bachelors of Arts in Philosophy into a successful career promoting the “moral case for fossil fuels” and has “proudly” disclosed his fossil fuel industry funding.
- Dr. David Legates, the newly-appointed deputy assistant secretary of commerce for observation and prediction at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Before being tapped by the Trump administration for this role, Legates was once Delaware’s State Climatologist, before the then-Governor asked him to stop using that title and eventually to step down, reportedly for his involvement in a number of widely-debunked papers that cast doubt on the impacts of global warming and were funded by oil and coal companies. Legates also appeared in the original Climate Hustle, as well as in other CDR videos for the Cornwall Alliance. In one segment a Cornwall Alliance video, Legates promoted creationism, saying, “The has to be a designer—a creator behind this.”

That Morano and CFACT were forced to recycle the same cast of “experts” is unsurprising, given how thin the ranks of outspoken climate deniers is getting in the community.