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**ENVIRONMENT
BLOG**

Rightwing group seeks to strip climate change from US classrooms

Climate change is a 'liberal' cause, argues Colorado-based petitioner, and requires a 'balancing' counterpoint

And so to Mesa County in Colorado where this week the first labour pains of what seems to be the birth of a new movement in the US were felt. Dozens of protesters attended a meeting of [School District 51's Board of Education](#) to hand over two petitions aimed at keeping political views out of the county's classrooms.

According to reports in the [local press](#), [Rose Pugliese](#), a local lawyer and failed Republican candidate for the board of education, authored both of the petitions. The first, which gained 600 signatures of support, simply wished for teachers not to express their "personal, political views" to pupils, whereas the second, which gained 700 signatures, sought to stop the teaching of global warming to children.

"[Global warming] is not a proven scientific theory. There is not evidence to support it," Pugliese told the board, according to a report in the [Denver Post](#). It's unclear from the reports whether the petition explicitly called for any teachings about global warming to be stripped from schools, or whether it called for the "other side of the story" to be taught, as Pugliese and her supporters seemed to be arguing before the board.

Pugliese, who is also a prominent member of a local Tea Party group called the [Western Slope Conservative Alliance](#), was supported at the meeting by a local PR consultant called [Laura Kindregan](#), who is the Colorado representative of a national group calling itself [Balanced Education for Everyone](#). It was launched in April to assist "concerned citizens around the country in challenging public schools to provide balanced education on the issue of global warming". It is itself an umbrella organisation of the [Independent Women's Forum](#), a conservative group whose [notion of feminism](#) is a tad different to most Guardian readers' understanding of the term.

The board of education will now mull over the issues raised by the petitions, but the episode serves to expose the rising tide within rightwing circles in the US to suppress the teaching of "liberal" issues such as [climate change](#) in schools. Or if it can't be suppressed, then at least some "balance" should be applied.

For example, Balanced Education for Everyone heavily promotes the showing of Phelim McAleer's [Not Evil Just Wrong](#) as a counterpoint to Al Gore's [An Inconvenient Truth](#). McAleer is an agitating Irish filmmaker who views climate change as "junk science" and who – as was the case with Martin Durkin's [The Great Global Warming Swindle](#) – has been accused by climate scientists of misrepresenting their views through the manipulative editing of interviews. (For example, look at [McAleer's edit of his exchange](#) last December with Professor Stephen Schneider, and then look at the [unedited](#)

The strength of the connection between Laura Kindregan and Phelim McAleer is also revealed on the website of [Amali](#), her PR consultancy, which states that "Amali is working with Not Evil Just Wrong on a campaign for balanced education in the schools through this incredible documentary".

Balanced Education for Everyone is a group that warrants closer inspection, it seems. First, why does it place so much stock in the worth of Not Evil Just Wrong? Go to the "[Parent's Resources](#)" section and all it seems to be saying is get your child's school, by any means possible, to screen this documentary, which "proves that the real threats to America (and the rest of the world) are the flawed science and sky-is-falling rhetoric of Al Gore and his allies in environmental extremism". The website of the film itself even supplies downloadable "educational resources" ([pdf](#)) to be used in schools. Surprise, surprise, the panel of "expert reviewers" includes well-known climate sceptics such as [Pat Michaels](#), a senior fellow at the [Cato Institute](#), a rightwing thinktank with a long history of [promoting ideologically tainted misinformation](#) about climate change. The blog makes no mention of this, of course.

That it's hard to put a cigarette paper when it comes to ideology between any of these players arguing for "balance" in the teaching of climate change in schools is not a great shock. As has been observed for years, most climate scepticism is fostered and dispersed from a well-defined frequency of the political spectrum. In other words, it is typically ideological objections to the proposed solutions rather than genuine scientific objections to the science that now drive so much of the climate scepticism we see and hear, particularly in the US.

Genuine educational balance is, of course, a worthy goal, but the great irony here – and, to a certain extent, dishonesty - is that these overtly political groups and individuals are explicitly arguing for politics to be eliminated from classrooms. And the best thing they can arm themselves with, it seems, is the polemical documentary Not Evil Just Wrong.

So, here's a suggestion: in the name of balance, let's just rid our schools of all these documentaries, An Inconvenient Truth included. Surely, it's possible to teach children about climate change in a balanced manner without relying on such controversial teaching aids? How about sticking to good old science text books? Oh, but it looks like the [same forces have their sights set on those](#), too.

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fotoartiste

28 May 2010, 5:50PM

The Right Wing in the U.S. has been running around like a chicken without it's head since Obama became president. Simply put they are nuts, after eight years of unbridled Bush lunacy and give aways to the rich and corporations it is impossible for conservatives to have a Democrat in office and a black one at that.

We are a racist country with a few fools who will do anything to keep their absurd beliefs alive even if it means the destruction of the earth.

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ThomasGoodey

28 May 2010, 5:52PM

Absolutely right. About time too.

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jigen

28 May 2010, 5:54PM

And here I was thinking that conservation is conservative. What a sad pack of tinfoil hats in that teabag party.

Facts are now liberal. I suppose they'd rather be teaching their paranoiac conspiracy theories as a bulwark against facts.

The right-wing: turning the US education system from bad to worse.

Jesus F Christ.

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Whosthithere

28 May 2010, 6:02PM

since oil companies pour the oil into the water nowadays, you don't need to worry that much about your CO2 any more.

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