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Attorney general goes fishing at U.Va.

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The issue Cuccinelli's latest drive for the headlines involves an inappropriate request for a scientist's e-mails.

Where we stand For somebody who claims to want to know the truth, his probe is suspiciously one-sided.

The Virginian-Pilot
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Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli filed a sweeping document request with the University of Virginia last month in an apparent effort to find a stray e-mail or other tidbit of information he could use to discredit a prominent climate scientist.

Michael Mann worked at U.Va. from 1999 to 2005.

He was one of several researchers whose name surfaced in a controversy last year over stolen e-mails that climate-change deniers say indicate scientists were manipulating data.

"In light of the Climategate e-mails, there does seem to at least be an argument to be made that a course was undertaken by some of the individuals involved, including potentially Michael Mann, where they were steering a course to reach a conclusion," Cuccinelli told The Washington Post.

Certainly, scientists should not be "steering a course to reach a conclusion."

The same goes for attorneys general.

Cuccinelli is demanding copies of correspondence between Mann and 39 other scientists, including Patrick Michaels, another former U.Va. professor and a prominent critic of the global-warming theory.

But that's where Cuccinelli's interest in Michaels ends.

While the attorney general wants extensive documentation for state funding received by Mann, Cuccinelli has no such interest in Michaels' finances, even though his tenure at U.Va. lasted 27 years and extended after Mann left for Pennsylvania State University.

Michaels is no stranger to controversy himself. He resigned as the state climatologist after attracting criticism for accepting more than \$165,000 from various industries, including utilities that operate coal-fired power plants, to underwrite his climate journal.

He's now a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute.

Mann and Michaels are both passionate about climate change. They just happen to have different views.

Mann believes greenhouse gases from industrial and other human activities are causing a sharp acceleration in global warming.

Michaels acknowledges that humans are affecting the Earth's temperature, but he believes Mann and others are exaggerating the negative effects.

The central question regarding Mann is whether he inappropriately disregarded some data from tree rings when they failed to correspond with historical temperature readings. It's a complicated topic, but a Penn State investigation concluded that Mann did not distort the data.

The National Academy of Sciences, a respected organization that Virginia has enlisted to lead a study on uranium mining, has also affirmed Mann's research.

Scientists who indulged in petulant and unprofessional e-mails last year are still trying to repair their reputations. Their success will depend on the judgment of fellow scientists, as it should.

There's no reason for Cuccinelli to insert himself into that conversation. It's bad enough that the

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attorney general is allowing his personal views to justify singling out one scientist for harassment.
 But Cuccinelli's fishing also threatens to intimidate dozens of other scientists who have done nothing more than pursue a line of research that is too important to become a casualty of political shenanigans.

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DOCUMENT REQUESTS ARE HARASSMENT?

Submitted by [Brian Kirwin](#) on Fri, 05/07/2010 at 10:21 am.

The Pilot better tell its reporters that document requests are viewed by the Pilot as harassment. They'd be shocked to realize how much they've been harassing folks.

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