

Attacks on Science in 2007

Dec 20 - EPA denies emission waiver that would have reduced greenhouse gases

On Dec. 20, 2007, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) denied California's request for a waiver from the Clean Air Act that would allow the state, and at least 16 other states, to enact tailpipe emissions standards for cars, trucks and SUVs that are more rigorous than the national standards. On Dec. 21, 2007, the San Francisco Chronicle reported that EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson "overruled the unanimous opinion of his legal and technical staff in blocking California's effort to cut greenhouse gases..." The Bush Administration continues its pattern of ignoring science and law in the pursuit of policy goals.

Dec 15 – Texas higher education panel recommends Institute of Creation Research for master's degree in science education

The efforts of creationists to influence the teaching of evolution received a boost in Texas in December when a panel recommended that the Institute of Creation Research's Graduate School be allowed to award master's degrees in science education. According to its website, "ICR has a three-fold mission to research, educate and communicate Truth involving the study and promotion of scientific creationism, Biblical creationism and related fields."

Dec 3 – 14 - US delegation to UN Framework Conference on Climate obstructs meaningful progress

The Bush Administration's delegation to the climate conference blocked meaningful progress on numerous issues. For example, in the last hours of the conference the U.S. objected to a request that stronger language be inserted into the agreement supporting technology transfer to help developing nations control greenhouse gases. Only after strong pressure, including outright booing by delegates, did U.S. Undersecretary of State, Paula Dobriansky, relent. In the end, the U.S. left Bali, Indonesia having committed to nothing more than future talks.

Dec 2 – Texas science educator forced to resign over evolution

In late October, Christine Castillo Comer forwarded an email regarding an upcoming presentation by Barbara Forrest, an author and outspoken opponent of intelligent design and creationism, and quickly found herself on paid leave. Ms. Comer, a science teacher for 27 years and the director of science for the Texas Education Agency for 9 years, apparently believed that evolution was of interest to science educators. Within an hour of forwarding the email, Lizzette Reynolds, the deputy commissioner for statewide policy and programs, complained and stated that the email implied endorsement of the speaker's position. Although she sent out an email retraction, Ms. Comer was forced to resign on Nov 7. Speaking publicly in early December, Ms. Comer reported asking, "Tom (Shindell, director for organizational development), am I getting fired over evolution?"

Oct 30 – Bush Administration censors CDC testimony on disease and climate change

Administration officials edited the Senate testimony of Julie Gerberding, director for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to remove pointed statements regarding the impact of global warming on health. Gerberding's comments had referred to increased mortality due to heat waves and other extreme weather. The deleted statements also referenced the unequal impact of climate change on the population, noting that racial and ethnic minorities, as well as the elderly, were likely to be disproportionately impacted by climate change, as was seen during and after Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. Such frank and objective testimony on climate change does not pass Bush Administration review.

Oct 17 – Susan Orr, birth control and abortion foe, appointed head of population affairs at DHHS

Susan Orr was appointed acting deputy assistant secretary for population affairs for the Department of Health and Human Services. This position involves overseeing \$283 million in annual grants to provide low-income families and others with contraceptive services, counseling and preventive screenings. Orr will be responsible for disseminating scientific information to millions of women. Orr opposes both abortion and birth control.

July 10 – Former U.S. Surgeon General testifies about attacks on science

Former U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona - a Bush administration appointee - went public during Congressional testimony on July 10 with exposure of how science, science policy and scientific thinking is being attacked across the board from the highest levels of government. His testimony revealed that his role as the "nation's doctor" was undermined and compromised. As Carmona stated: "Anything that doesn't fit into the political appointees' ideological, theological or political agenda is ignored, marginalized or simply buried".

May 28 – Answers in Genesis opens "Creation Museum" in Petersburg, Kentucky

The religious right stepped up its campaign for Biblical literacy and against evolution and science with the opening of the \$27 million "Creation Museum". The museum is forthright about its view that the Bible is literally true, but claims it is presenting "creation science". Creating an illusion of scientific process by using special effects worthy of a Hollywood production could be good theater, but it is very bad science, and very bad for the public discourse regarding science.