

Scientific Integrity in New Legislation

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When considering the creation of the next generation of environmental and public health laws, Congress should take steps to ensure those laws are resistant to political tampering. To further this goal, we are developing a check-list for legislators to ensure strong scientific integrity language is included in any pending legislation.

Scientific Integrity:

- How does this legislation protect science from being suppressed, distorted or manipulated?
- What mechanisms are in place to protect employees who report efforts to suppress or distort science?
- Are the metrics and benchmarks for policies based on the best available science?

Transparency:

- Are the scientific studies and other research transparent and publicly accessible?
- Are scientists' dissenting views parts of the public record?
- Are federal scientists to discuss their work with the media?
- Do federal scientists have the freedom to discuss their views, even when they disagree with policy, provided they issue a disclaimer that they are speaking as private individuals?
- Do federal scientists have the right to publish their work in peer-reviewed journals?
- Do federal scientists have the freedom to discuss their work with their colleagues at international conferences?

Rule making and policy making:

- How does the legislation incorporate scientific advisors and advisory committees into the policy process?
- What is the role of the other agencies and of the Office of Management and Budget in formulating policy?

Conflicts of interest:

- Does the legislation create any committees, councils or other entities?
- How will the selection process for members work?
- What information about potential conflicts has to be disclosed?
- Is there a limit on conflict of interest waivers an agency may grant to these participants?
- If it is a scientific advisory panel, are corporate scientists involved as stakeholders or special government employees (SGEs)?
- Are all the advisory councils and other entities that include the participation of non-governmental employees under the jurisdiction of the Federal Advisory Committee Act?
- Are members of these advisory councils permitted to belong to scientific societies, including those with legislative agendas?

Accountability:

- When special interests lobby federal agencies, will that information be made public?
- Will their requests be part of the public record?
- Who will ensure that all action items and reports are created and published on time? How?