

Notes for press conference in rebuttal of HJR 12

By

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I want to issue a friendly challenge to the legislators who sponsored this resolution to come up with the names of ten credible scientists who share their “conspiracy” perspective. By "credible," I mean:

1. They are trained in a climate-relevant field
2. They have published research on climate change in peer-reviewed scientific journals.
3. Their research is not funded by the fossil fuels industry.

What is important to understand is the sound science is based on a long, complex process that leads to a consensus regarding the validity of models. It does not require unanimity, but it does require that a theory be tested rigorously and through replication. This has occurred in regard to anthropogenic climate change. There are literally thousands—not hundreds—but thousands of bona fide climate scientists who have contributed to the body of research that indicates an extremely high probability that human activity is the source of dramatic changes in climate. There is a handful of scientists who have expressed doubt, but the overwhelming scientific consensus supports the climate change hypothesis.

In regard to the competing views of climate change that is taking place in the press today (not in scientific journals), there is a striking parallel from history. In the 1950s scientists began to discover a causal link between tobacco usage and lung cancer. A strong scientific consensus developed that drew a strong correlation between smoking and cancer. But the tobacco industry mounted a multi-million dollar disinformation campaign to convince people that smoking did not lead to health problems. They hired scientists to cook the data, they paid doctors to say that smoking was actually good for you, and they demonized researchers who reached conclusions the tobacco companies did not like. A lot of people died of lung cancer before the nation realized that smoking was indeed a causative agent. Today, we see the same process happening with the debate over climate change; the carbon industry is mounting a campaign very similar to the one created by the tobacco companies. But we must focus on science, not political hype; we should listen to scientists, not ideologues; we must allow the data to lead to our conclusions, and not start with a conclusion and then ignore all information that does not support that conclusion. Only then can we respond to crisis at hand in a constructive and informed manner.

Thank you.