

# NATIONAL SCIENCE POLICY PROPOSAL FOR THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION

Adopted October 6,, 2008, by the \*Southern California Federation of Scientists\*

*\*The Southern California Federation of Scientists (SCFS) (<http://www.scfs-la.org/>) is a non-profit organization that was formed in 1953. Its central purpose is succinctly described by its theme, "Science In The Public Interest". SCFS is an interdisciplinary organization of scientists, engineers, mathematicians, scholars and concerned citizens dedicated to providing independent scientific and technical analyses on issues affecting Science, Society and Public Policy. A history of some of its accomplishments may be found on the above website.\**

Upon my inauguration, I,

Barack Obama -----  
Joseph Biden -----  
Ralph Nader -----  
Matt Gonzalez -----  
Cynthia McKinney -----  
Rosa Clemente -----  
Bob Barr -----  
Wayne Root -----  
John McCain -----  
Sarah Palin -----

agree to fully adhere to the following policy on science during my tenure in office:

**THE POLICY OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION SHALL BE TO DEDICATE ITSELF TO THE ETHIC AND CODE OF CONDUCT THAT FOSTERS INDEPENDENT AND OBJECTIVE SCIENTIFIC INPUT INTO POLICY FORMATION BY**

- never manipulating scientific advisory committees
- never distorting and suppressing scientific information
- never interfering with scientific research and analysis

**AND BY BANISHING THE FOLLOWING ABUSES AND PRACTICES EXTENSIVELY USED BY THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION:**

- Appointing Unqualified Persons with Industry Ties.
- Appointing Unqualified Persons with Ideological Agendas.
- Stacking Advisory Committees.
- Opposing Qualified Experts.
- Including Misleading Information in Presidential Communications.
- Presenting Incomplete and Inaccurate Information to Congress.
- Altering Web Sites.
- Suppressing Agency Reports.
- Scrutinizing Ongoing Research.
- Obstructing Agency Analyses.
- Undermining Outcome Assessment.
- Blocking Scientific Publication.

## Background

Dragnet, arguably the most famous police series in radio/TV history.(radio series 1949-1957, TV series 1951-1959 and 1967-1970), had as its hallmark the relentless pursuit of gathering evidence based on actual facts in the quest to track down and apprehend perpetrators of crime. The famous sergeant on the program (Joe Friday, played by Jack Webb) had a simple line that he used all the time to interrogate people: "Just the facts, Ma'am, just the facts." In a nutshell, the structure of the show was based on "the scientific method".

Policy-makers (public, private) in general are confronted by many complex problems whose solutions rest inherently on scientific knowledge or technical insight. Most policy makers as well as the general public and the media have little or no background in science or technology. This puts a considerable premium on the clarity, veracity and reliability of advice and information that policy makers and other non-experts receive from various issuers. Such advice and information must be as free as practicable from certain inherent flaws to which any issuer may be susceptible. Often, the best of policy-makers' decisions on matters having scientific content are based on analyses that are incorrect, fragmented, lopsided or based on distortions or biases intended for self-serving aims.

In its two terms in office, the Bush administration has ignored, distorted, and suppressed scientific information in order to support its political agenda. The administration has politicized science and has displayed a callousness toward empirical evidence.

In February, 2004, more than 60 leading scientists, including a dozen Nobel laureates, accused the Bush administration of frequently suppressing or distorting scientific analysis from federal agencies when it disagrees with administration policies. The research covered a range of issues, from climate change to HIV/AIDS.

“When scientific knowledge has been found to be in conflict with its political goals, the administration has often manipulated the process through which science enters into its decisions,” the scientists said in a statement.

The administration, they said, distorted science by putting people with conflicts of interest into official positions, censoring and suppressing reports by its own scientists and failing to seek independent advice.

The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) said that the Bush administration has repeatedly tried to adjust the science to fit its political objectives or to block the release of science that would contradict its policies.

Kurt Gottfried, emeritus professor of physics at Cornell University and chairman of UCS said: “What we are seeing here, and we have not seen it before, is an administration that distorts the process by which it gets advice and censors the advice it gets from its own scientists.”

In 2001, a group of eminent American scientists affiliated with UCS contacted Seth Shulman, an experienced investigative journalist, to look into charges of serious mishandling of scientific information in the current administration. Shulman's investigation resulted in the groundbreaking report "Restoring Scientific Integrity in Policy Making," which served as the basis for a highly publicized UCS scientists' statement accusing the Bush administration of a misuse of science that was signed by dozens of Nobel laureates, National Medal of Science recipients, and members of the National Academy of Sciences. To date, more than 8,000 scientists across the country have signed the statement based upon Shulman's reporting. Shulman's book, "Undermining Science: Suppression and Distortion in the Bush Administration", draws upon scores of interviews and includes never-released information that documents the Bush administration's suppression and distortion of science.

Undermining Science covers:

- \* The Bush administration's abuse and misuse of science in areas including stem cell research, AIDS prevention, environmental protection, the Iraq war, the teaching of evolution, and global warming;
- \* The administration's use of political litmus tests in selecting administrators for science-based agencies and in selecting scientists on federal advisory committees;

\* The dangerous consequences of the Bush administration's war on science for the caliber and integrity of the nation's scientific research.

**ALL TOO OFTEN, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN COMMITTED TO BELIEF OVER REASON, IDEOLOGY OVER FACTS, POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY OVER SCIENCE, AND WISHFUL THINKING OVER REALISTIC ASSESSMENTS.**

The word **science** itself has its roots in the Latin word **scientia** which means knowledge. Thus, science is the process of eliminating ignorance of the natural world through the acquisition of new knowledge. The process itself is one that gathers data (knowledge) systematically through careful observation of various phenomena and reduces the data to testable laws and theories which the scientist develops in an attempt to make sense of the observations. The scientific engine is a cycle in the sense that new observations may challenge prevailing theories. Then, new theories are developed which may better approximate the observations. Even if absolute truth cannot be obtained, the scientist seeks successively more accurate approximations to account for how nature works.

The Greek physician, Hippocrates (460-.377 BC), said: ***“There are in fact two things, science and opinion; the former begets knowledge, the latter ignorance.”***