



CLIMATE DOLLARS

HOW ONE FLAWED STUDY FOOLED THE MEDIA AND
POISONED THE DEBATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE



CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER
AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

COUNTING CLIMATE DOLLARS

Robert Brulle, a sociologist at Drexel University, thinks he has uncovered a vast conspiracy of energy companies and their conspirators, whom he alleges work to “deny climate change” and make billions of dollars while destroying the planet.

In a still [widely cited study](#), Brulle claimed to expose a vast network of organizations executing “a deliberate and organized effort to misdirect debate and distort the understanding of climate change.” Brulle’s premise centered on the uncertainty many Americans feel over the alarmist claim that severe climate change is occurring because of man-made carbon dioxide emissions. Brulle inferred that this uncertainty stems from a conspiracy that prevents the public from sharing his alarmist climate views. Worse, the public’s uncertainty prevents Brulle and his environmentalist allies from convincing lawmakers to restrict carbon dioxide emissions and save the planet.

Brulle provided scant evidence of the public’s ignorance, but he gave lots of numbers purportedly exposing its source: center-right nonprofit groups that form a “climate change counter-movement.” The smoking-gun statistic—call it, “the Brulle Number”—was the combined annual income of 91 Conspirators working to “deny climate change.” Brulle calculated that from 2003-2010, the average annual income of these Conspirators totaled “just over \$900 million.”

The Brulle Number reverberated in an echo chamber across the popular and scholarly media, where his calculation was twisted into an even more extreme claim, exemplified in this *Guardian* headline (Dec. 20, 2013): “Conservative groups spend \$1bn a year to fight action on climate change.”ⁱ That claim was false twice over.

First, Brulle’s study did not measure spending but *income*—regardless of whether that income was spent on anything. Second, the study made no effort to isolate the amount these 91 Conspirators spent to engage climate science issues, even though most of the diverse groups regularly engaged other policy debates (welfare, telecom regulation, agricultural policy, tax rates, *ad infinitum*). Brulle’s wide net also snared groups that conduct little research or advocacy, like the Intermountain Rural Electric Association. IREA is a nonprofit co-op that provides electricity to Coloradans, but Brulle still counted every penny of its 9-figure annual income as though it were a K Street public policy powerhouse. Indeed, IREA single-handedly accounts for over 21 percent of all the money behind Brulle’s alleged Conspiracy.

[A new study](#) by the Capital Research Center undertakes the analysis Brulle should have produced, cutting his billion-dollars-a-year figure down to size. The study’s author, CRC vice president Dr. Steven J. Allen, investigated the data for 2010, the most recent year Brulle studied, and corrected his unjustifiably sloppy methodology by:

- **Counting spending, not income.** By counting income rather than spending, Brulle overstated the activities of The Conspirators in 2010 by \$169 million, or about 13 percent (the groups’ revenues were \$1.51 billion, versus \$1.34 billion spending).
- **Isolating Global Warming expenditures.** Brulle lumped all the groups’ activities together, even if the group was a think tank with a wide issue portfolio or a rural electricity co-op with a miniscule advocacy budget. When

CRC investigated the actual proportion of their spending focused on climate science—by speaking to the organizations, examining their IRS filings (which sometimes specify expenses by category), tallying media mentions and web pages, reading the groups’ annual reports, etc.—it found that at most 5 to 6 percent of the Conspirators’ spending attempted to engage the public on the science of climate change. That knocks another \$1.24 billion off the Brulle Number for 2010.

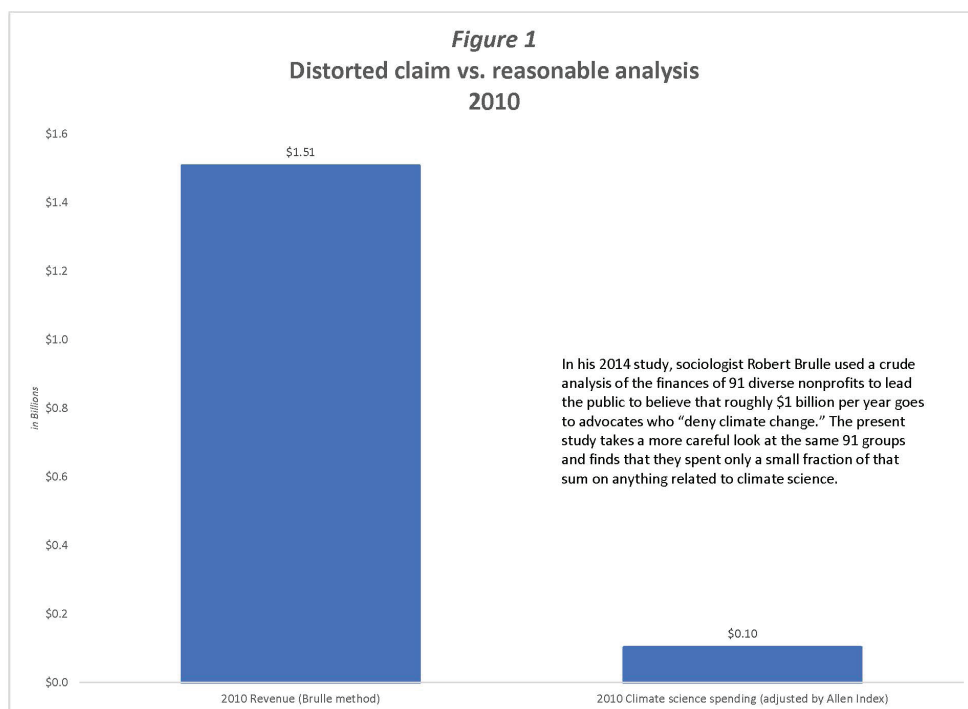
So, after correcting for Brulle’s poor methodology, the inflated Brulle Number of \$1.51 billion (for 2010) plummets to \$0.1 billion—an overstatement of 93 percent.

Brulle mildly referenced his inadequate methodology ([in section 2.1](#)), but he likely knew reporters would distort his bloated figure and attribute every penny to climate change “denial,” as the *Guardian* and many others did.

FUZZY NUMBERS AND HYPOCRISY

Of course, CRC’s calculation of 5 to 6 percent spending on climate science is only an imperfect estimate. But we’ve posted all our data online, and unlike Brulle, we welcome debate.

Note, however, that Brulle knew the shoddiness of his methodology. In 2011, another researcher, Matthew Nisbet, [used the same methodology to study the flow of money into Brulle’s allies in the environmentalist movement](#). Outraged, Brulle critiqued Nisbet’s study at length with the *New York Times*. He observed that nonprofit groups have “very substantial” limitations on their lobbying and political activities, and objected to the way Nisbet’s study counted “total spending,” which is unfair because the environmental groups “don’t spend a lot of their funding on politics” but on unrelated expenses. Brulle was so upset about this study by the well-credentialed, center-left academic Nisbet (who receives funding from left-wing foundations) that Brulle insisted his own name



be removed as a reviewer of the study, “because I felt my role was being used to create a veneer of academic legitimacy.” ([Andrew C. Revkin, “Beyond the Climate Blame Game,” April 25, 2011.](#))

THE REAL DAVID AND GOLIATH

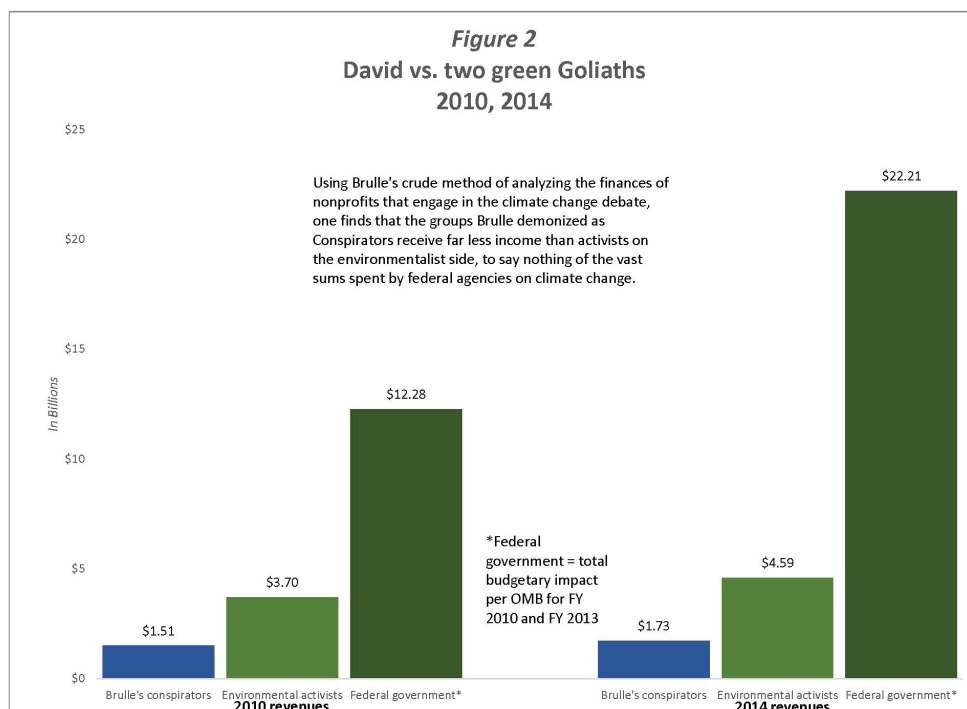
Brulle’s anger over the Nisbet study is understandable, because it found that Global Warming alarmists are the real Goliath in this debate, while the smaller David is played by the less wealthy and powerful skeptics. Nisbet’s study of 2009 data concluded—using crude, Brulle-style methodology—that environmentalist groups with alarmist views on climate change enjoyed \$1.7 billion in revenues, versus \$907 million for think tanks, advocacy groups, and industry associations on the other side. We found something similar when we investigated data for 2010 (the last year Brulle studied) and 2014 (the most recent year available). Using Brulle and Nisbet’s methodology, we totaled income for Brulle’s 91 Conspirators on the center-right, and then we compared that figure

to the total income of environmentalist groups (see methodology note [here](#)).

Like Nisbet, we found that the funding of Brulle’s allies dwarfed that of his foes, whom Brulle tried so hard to depict as having unmatched control over the public’s view of climate science:

- In **2010**, alarmist groups’ income was \$3.7 billion vs. \$1.5 billion for skeptical groups.
- In **2014**, alarmist groups enjoyed over 2.6 times more income than skeptical groups: \$4.6 billion to \$1.7 billion. (Note that the alarmist group’s income grew by 24 percent over the period, while the skeptical groups grew by only 15 percent.)

And yet another large issue complicates Brulle’s claims: he says the defining characteristic of the Conspirators is an effort to block “legislative restrictions on carbon emissions.” Yet it’s easy to show that many of the groups Brulle identifies as conspiring against this goal have in fact supported carbon taxes, which means they don’t belong on



his list in the first place. Scholars at the American Enterprise Institute, for example, both during the period he studied and more recently, have advocated in their own studies and at conferences, not to mention in the mainstream media, in favor of a carbon tax. (E.g., [Kenneth P. Green, Steven F. Hayward, and Kevin A. Hassett, "Climate Change: Caps vs. Taxes," AEI Environmental Policy Outlook, June 2007](#); [Nick Schulz, "The Merit of a Carbon Tax," The Hill, July 31, 2007](#). Marlo Lewis, ["AEI Hosts Fifth Secret Meeting to Promote Carbon Tax," July 11, 2012](#)). Under Brulle's parameters, AEI should have been removed from the analysis, and its millions in income cut from the Brulle Number altogether.

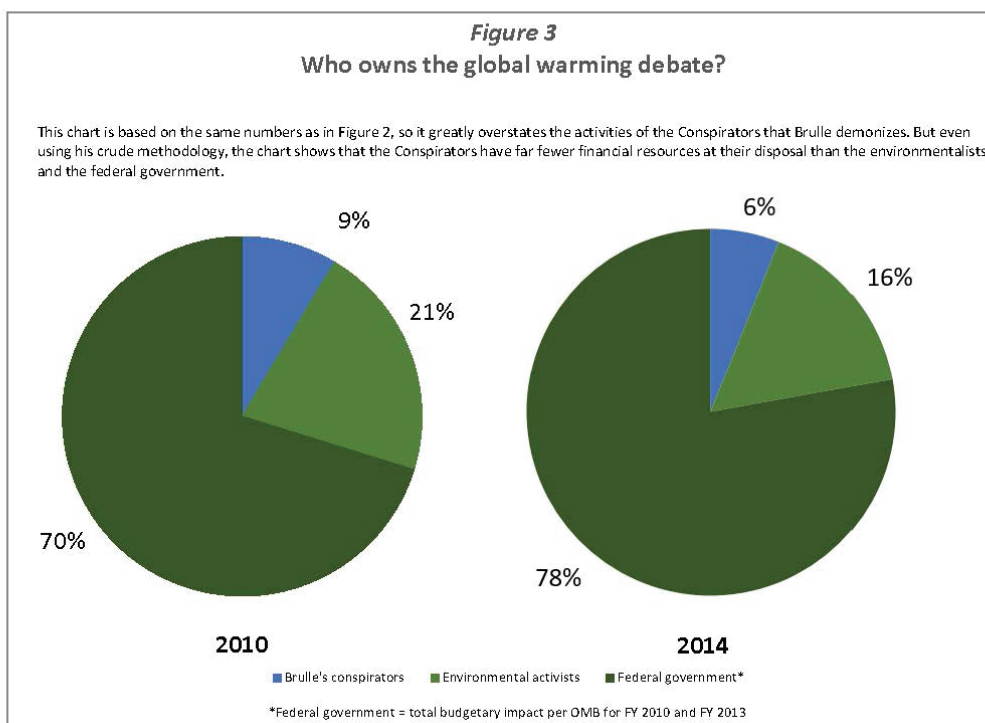
One last inconvenient truth lies at the center of this dispute over funding: all the private-sector funding on both sides can't compare to what the federal government spends on climate change programs and messages. The federal Leviathan is so hydra-headed that no one knows for certain how much it's spending in this area, but the best estimate, based on numbers directly from the federal government, is that from Fiscal Years 1993 to 2014,

[total U.S. expenditures on climate change exceeded \\$166 billion in 2012 dollars.](#)

CONCLUSION

In sum, Brulle's study and its distorted reverberations in the media echo chamber grossly misled the public about groups active on both sides of the climate debate. If environmentalists seek an excuse for their failure to see their preferred policies enacted, they'll have to find a better one than the funds going to their opponents.

Disclosure: Brulle lists the Capital Research Center as a Conspirator, and we have indeed received support over the years from his two bêtes noires, Exxon and Koch-related philanthropies. But Exxon stopped giving to us a decade ago, and funders focused on climate change issues have never provided as much as 10 percent of our annual revenues. Nor have we ever devoted as much as 10 percent of our spending to climate science.





To provide additional context on the debate over climate change, [we have assembled a collection of scientific predictions of climate disasters—both hot and cold—from the last 122 years](#). And we also have an essay from Kenneth Haapala, “A Short History of Global Warming Fears,” that explains how present worries over warming stem

from an educated guess in the 1970s, leading to projections of climate change that have failed to be borne out by the evidence.

Capital Research Center
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¹The newspaper later changed the headline “to reflect that not all the \$1bn referred to will have funded climate change work,” yet the “corrected” headline was still false: “Conservative groups spend up to \$1bn a year to fight action on climate change.”

COUNTING CLIMATE DOLLARS: WHO CONTROLS THE DEBATE?

BY DR. STEVEN J. ALLEN

Sometimes conspiracies are real. The Gunpowder Plot in England was real. The conspiracy behind the Lincoln assassination was real, as was the Watergate cover-up. As an investigative journalist, I work every day to expose real conspiracies. But many alleged conspiracies are crackpot fantasies like the International Jewish Conspiracy, the notion that the CIA killed JFK, and now the claim that a worldwide conspiracy of energy companies and their co-conspirators are working to “deny climate change” and make billions of dollars while destroying the planet.

One key piece of evidence presented in support of the Global Warming/Climate Change conspiracy—let’s call it The Conspiracy—is the study “Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of U.S. climate change counter-movement organizations,” by a Drexel University sociologist, Robert J. Brulle. In the paper, Brulle claimed to expose a vast network of organizations working in concert to confuse people as part of, in his words, “a deliberate and organized effort to misdirect the public discussion and distort the public’s understanding of climate change.”¹

As proof of The Conspiracy, Brulle cited a 2012 Pew study in which, Pew claimed, respondents were split (43 percent no/45 percent yes) on the question of whether scientists believe the earth is getting warmer “because of” human activity.² This response, Brulle wrote, doesn’t reflect “the near unanimity of the scientific community about anthropogenic [i.e., man-made] climate change.” He then claimed that this alleged misunderstanding by the public arose because of trickery, as the scientific “literature...clearly shows.”

But the literature doesn’t show any such thing. Brulle cited, as his reference to a “deliberate and organized effort” to “misdirect” and “distort,” page 35 of a 2011 National Research Council report.³ Actually, that page covers various reasons people might *fail* to understand the issue, even if they were never misdirected by evildoers; the reasons include

- the fact that measuring climate change is “a difficult task even for scientific experts using voluminous data and complex mathematical models”
- the fact that people rely on both trustworthy and untrustworthy sources of information on the topic
- and the fact that climate change is so gradual that it’s hard for people to judge whether it’s real and whether it’s part of a natural pattern.

The only line on the page relating to Brulle’s Conspiracy is the claim that “Most people rely on secondary sources for information, especially the mass media; and some of these sources are affected by concerted campaigns against policies to limit CO₂ [carbon dioxide] emissions, which promote beliefs about climate change that are not well-supported by scientific evidence.” Given that people on Brulle’s side of the Global Warming/Climate Change argument have been making false claims for decades—for example, that New York and Washington would be under water by the year 2000⁴—and given that the mass media sound daily alarms about the climate threat, the statement in the National Research Council report that “some” information sources are “affected” by campaigns opposed to policies that would limit carbon

dioxide emissions is scant foundation for believing a massive conspiracy exists.⁵

“Those on Brulle’s side of the argument have been making false claims for decades—for example, that New York and Washington would be under water by the year 2000.”

Brulle and others like him refuse to concede that anyone on the other side of the argument has a point, whether those opponents are disputing the severity of climate change now occurring, or the degree to which man-made causes are responsible for change, or even pointing out that it’s unclear what the Pew survey’s ambiguous question is asking. No, for Brulle, if lots of Americans express doubts about environmentalists’ claims on climate change, it can only be the result of The Conspiracy. Otherwise, no one would have any doubts at all. Thus no proof of The Conspiracy is necessary; its existence is self-evident.

Try arguing with a man who says the fact you’re arguing with him is proof you’re lying. (For more reasons to be cautious about accepting the claims of Global Warming theory, see the nearby “Short History of Global Warming Fears.”)

“Try arguing with a man who says the fact you’re arguing with him is proof you’re lying.”

Despite its failings—and more will be spelled out below—the Brulle study has enjoyed voluminous citations in scholarly and popular media. Google’s index of academic papers lists 130 citations for that paper alone, and Brulle’s work overall has received thousands of citations in papers that mention “climate change.” Hundreds of supposed studies have reinforced belief in The Conspiracy; Brulle himself notes “over 100 peer-reviewed articles” on

the topic.⁶ In reality, virtually all of those articles consist of one supposed expert citing another supposed expert, or a third citing the first two, and so on. [For believers in The Conspiracy, proof is the plural of accusation.](#)

THE BRULLE NUMBER

The most oft-cited claim in the Brulle study and accompanying supplementary material⁷ regards the typical annual income of 91 organizations in The Conspiracy: “just over \$900 million.” I call this the Brulle Number. Brulle, in the paper, stated that this was the total income of organizations that, he believes, “deny climate change,” and he collectively labeled these groups “the climate change counter-movement (CCCM).”

In his study, Brulle examined 118 organizations that he said were part of the CCCM—or as I call it, using explicit language for Brulle’s clear insinuation, “The Conspiracy.” Of those 118 groups, he looked at 91 that had filed public records with the Internal Revenue Service. For the period 2003-2010, Brulle came up with a total of \$7.2 billion in revenue for the 91 groups, and then he took the annual average to arrive at what I’m calling the Brulle Number: “just over \$900 million.”

To discover how exaggerated Brulle’s number is, I examined the groups’ income for 2010, the last year Brulle considered. He calculated that The Conspiracy in that year had total revenues of approximately \$1.2 billion.⁸ Brulle’s claims were cited by environmentalists and news media around the world as evidence of an immense conspiracy, concocted by oil and coal companies and their allies to attain great wealth by ruining the planetary environment. The Brulle Number fueled the belief that skepticism of Global Warming/Climate Change theory is just a cunning plot by “deniers” (a term intended to liken the skeptics to the Nazi sympathizers who deny that the Holocaust occurred). Such people don’t even have

the right to speak freely on the issue, declared Brulle's close ally, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), because "fraud is not protected under the First Amendment."⁹

"Skepticism of the Climate Change theory is just a cunning plot by 'deniers' (a term used for Nazi sympathizers who deny that the Holocaust occurred)."

An important point, easily missed: What Brulle measured was each group's total income, not its spending, much less its actual spending on the Global Warming/Climate Change issue or, more broadly, on matters related to energy and the environment. If an organization raised \$1,000,000, and then put \$100,000 into savings, spent \$1,000 on climate change issues and \$899,000 on tax reform, criminal justice reform, and Medicare reform, the group's entire \$1 million income was included in the Brulle Number. That's misleading to an extreme degree; at the very least, Brulle should have counted only total spending, not income. Still, if you read carefully, you find Brulle did indicate that his number represented total income, whether it was spent or not, and whether or not it was spent on environmental issues or other areas of public policy.

Yet when politicians and the mainstream media cited the number to indicate the size of The Conspiracy, they left out all qualifications. And so "approximately a billion dollars" became the size of the so-called "denial" effort, rather than a number that aggregates all income received by all of the organizations that, at some point, spent any money on work that questioned, or was thought to have questioned, environmentalists' apocalyptic claims on Global Warming.

For a rough analogy, imagine if someone calculated the resources of the Democratic Party by adding up the income of all registered Democrat voters

in the United States. Theoretically, the Democratic Party could call upon all those resources in an election, but it's ludicrous to calculate that number and imply it equates to what the Democrats spent to battle Republicans in the last election.

FAKE NEWS

Brulle fulminates in his study about how The Conspiracy manages to "manipulate and mislead the public," which is ironic given how Brulle's own research is in the "media spotlight."

"Conservative groups spend \$1bn a year to fight action on climate change," read the headline in the U.K. *Guardian*. The article began: "Conservative groups have spent \$1bn a year on the effort to deny science and oppose action on climate change, according to the first extensive study into the anatomy of the anti-climate effort." Brulle's study "offers the most definitive exposure to date of the political and financial forces blocking American action on climate change." The *Guardian* article acknowledged in its fifth paragraph that the billion-dollar claim in its headline and first paragraph wasn't really true, because "It was not always possible to separate funds designated strictly for climate-change work from overall budgets, Brulle said." But this too was a lie, because it implied Brulle sometimes made the effort to "separate funds" for climate change work, when in fact he never once bothered to try.¹⁰

"The Guardian article acknowledged in its fifth paragraph that the billion-dollar claim in its headline and first paragraph wasn't really true."

The newspaper later "corrected" its headline, but even the correction involved falsehoods. The revised headline, instead of saying "Conservative groups *spend* \$1bn a year to fight action on climate

change” as previously, simply said, “Conservative groups spend *up to* \$1bn a year to fight action on climate change” (emphasis added), which was still entirely misleading. And the online correction note only said the headline was changed, when the opening sentence was too, even though it remained as false as the headline. In addition, the sentence claiming “It was not always possible to separate funds designated strictly for climate-change work from overall budgets,” which was also untrue, remained untouched.

Likewise, an article in *ClimateWire* noted that “Together, they [the 91 groups] raise about \$900 million annually.” Later, the article conceded that “Altogether, the 91 groups raised about \$7 billion between 2003 and 2010 for all of their activities, including issues unrelated to climate change.”¹¹ Cenk Uygur, formerly of MSNBC, did a 10-minute Internet video focusing on the “\$900 million a year...spent to deceive us,” featuring an online graphic saying “\$900 million/year.” “To be fair,” Uygur acknowledged, “it was not all about climate change,” because some of the money went for “other forms of propaganda.”

“The \$900 million a year spent to deceive us was not all about climate change; some of the money went for ‘other forms of propaganda.’”

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported, “In the high-stakes conflict over U.S. climate-change policy, groups that deny or cast doubt on global warming brought in \$7.2 million from 2003 to 2010...‘Powerful funders are supporting the campaign to deny scientific findings about global warming,’ reported Robert J. Brulle....” In the eighth paragraph, the *Inquirer* noted the response by James Taylor of the Heartland Institute, who observed that many of the groups “support other causes as well” and, in some cases, spend “less than 10 percent of their funding...on climate-related efforts.”¹² These articles are the relatively accurate ones.

By comparison, many news stories repeating the Brulle Number failed to make even the perfunctory reference to the money spent on other issues. Regarding the portion of the organizations’ budgets that came from foundations, the *Daily Astorian* and other papers reported that 140 donor entities “funneled \$558 million to 118 climate change-denial groups between 2003 and 2010”—with no mention of the fact that only a small portion of that money would have gone to so-called “denial.” (The \$558 million refers to funding from foundations; the remaining funding for the Conspiracy came from individual donors, member dues, investment income, etc.) The *Roanoke Times*, *Winston-Salem Journal*, and other papers ran an article that even missed the distinction between revenues and spending as it declared, “A recent study by Drexel University professor Robert Brulle documents almost a billion dollars a year spent by think tanks, foundations and others denying that there’s a problem at all.”¹³ The same error appeared in an op-ed in the *Concord Journal*, which stated that Brulle “published a study asserting that close to \$1 billion a year is being spent by vested interests to fight climate change policy.”¹⁴ CNN reported, “A recent study by Drexel University found that conservative foundations and others have bankrolled denial to the tune of \$558 million between 2003 and 2010.”¹⁵ That figure, again with no qualification, was used in speeches by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, a climate change crusader, such as his call on May 6, 2015 to use the RICO Act—a law intended to combat organized crime syndicates—to put “deniers” in jail.¹⁶ Asian News International noted that “A new study has exposed the organizational underpinning and funding behind the ‘powerful’ climate change countermovement,” with a total annual income of “just over 900 million dollars.”¹⁷ The same claim appeared in the U.K. *Daily Mail*. The *Canberra Times* said the Brulle study “finds that organisations promoting attacks on climate science have a combined yearly access to \$US900 million...from increasingly untraceable sources.”¹⁸ The Environmental Defense Fund put out a press release declaring: “Drexel University professor

Robert Brulle reviewed IRS data from 2003 to 2010 and found a web of entities investing over \$900 annually in organizations dedicated to obstructing climate progress and fighting the deployment of safe, clean energy in America.”¹⁹ In 2015, *The Lancet*—one of the world’s most respected medical journals and thus a publication trained in the most careful parsing of statistics—quoted a scholarly work that cited Brulle’s paper: “It is estimated that US industry spent close to \$500 million in its successful campaign against the 2010 House of Representatives proposal to cap US emissions. A major study of the Climate Change Counter Movement in the USA identifies funding of around \$900 million annually.”²⁰

A FAIR MEASUREMENT?

Brulle knew or should have known that his almost-billion-dollar number would be presented by his allies in the media and the environmentalist movement as the budget of the so-called “denial” effort, not as merely the combined budgets of all groups that Brulle labeled, rightly or wrong, as “deniers.”

And it’s easy to prove that Brulle knows perfectly well that his methodology is flawed—that it is unfair to measure the size of an organization’s work on climate change just by looking at the group’s total revenues—because Brulle made that same point himself when he looked at the work of Matthew C. Nisbet, then at American University. In the case of Nisbet, Brulle was honest about the shortcomings of this bad methodology, presumably because this time the methodology cut against Brulle’s desire to plant in the public’s mind the falsehood that his environmentalist allies are the poor, small David, struggling to fight the vast, wealthy Goliath formed by the “deniers.”

“Brulle wanted the public to believe that the environmentalists are the poor, small David, struggling to fight the vast, wealthy Goliath formed by the ‘deniers.’”

The study at issue is a 2011 report in which Nisbet analyzed claims by some environmentalists that they lost the political battle over creating a federal cap-and-trade tax on carbon dioxide emissions because environmentalists were outgunned; that is, because industry associations and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce marshalled resources far beyond those of cap-and-trade’s supporters.

Platts Coal Trader summarized Nisbet’s work: “According to the report, in 2009, national environmental groups working on climate change generated \$1.7 billion in revenue, spent \$1.4 billion on program activities and spent \$394 million on climate change and energy-specific activities. During the same time period, conservative think tanks, advocacy groups and industry associations brought in \$907 million in revenue, spent \$787 million on all program-related activities and spent \$259 million specifically on climate change and energy policy.”²¹

Andrew Revkin of the *New York Times* said he “asked Brulle about the report’s evidence for a very large war chest for environmental groups.” Brulle’s response:

There is a lot of money in the environmental movement. But first, there are very big restrictions and limitations on what they can spend that money on. Charitable organizations have very serious limitations on lobbying and political activities. You would have to check with a nonprofit specialist exactly what they are, but I know they are very substantial.

Second, this is total spending. So this includes groups like the Nature Conservancy, who accounts for about 20% of all spending, and basically buys land for conservation. The other big ones are groups like the Trust for Public Land, the Wildlife Conservation Society (which includes the Bronx Zoo) and World Wildlife Fund. This also includes all of the funding to maintain the Appalachian Trail, huts in the Adirondacks, running outdoor education centers, member outings, etc. etc. etc. So most of the funding goes for things like buying land for nature preservation, wildlife refuges, and to maintain open spaces, running outdoor nature education facilities, protecting and enhancing the habitat of wildlife and endangered species, building and maintaining hiking trails and outdoor recreation spaces, as well as engaging in political activities. But that is a pretty small [sic] and limited by law. So comparing operating expenses might create the idea that the environmental movement has a lot of funding, but when you get down to it, they don't spend a lot of their funding on politics.²²

In short: It's not fair to count an organization's entire spending (much less its entire income) when measuring the size of its effort on the climate change issue.

Brulle was so appalled by his fellow environmentalist Nisbet's work that he had his own name removed as a reviewer of Nisbet's paper "because I felt my role was being used to create a veneer of academic legitimacy that I do not believe the report merits"²³ Brulle also returned the \$500 reviewer's fee, according to *Congressional Quarterly Weekly*.²⁴

The Nisbet report came to the attention of Joe Romm of the Center for American Progress (CAP), an organization closely linked to Hillary Clinton. (CAP was founded by John Podesta, who chaired the 2016 Clinton for President campaign. Its current president, Neera Tanden, was policy director for the 2008 Clinton campaign.) According to *The Economist*, Brulle "was happy to assist Mr. Romm

in his scathing criticism," and "the onslaught drew some blood," particularly over the fact that "Mr. Nisbet's analysis tends to stress the gross amounts available, not spending on specific things."²⁵

Observing that the environmental movement likes to present itself as an underdog fighting against big business interests, Nisbet told *CQ Weekly* that "Until we get beyond the David vs. Goliath narrative, those of us who care about action on climate change can always use that as an excuse."²⁶ Note that Nisbet and Brulle are both on the same side of the dispute over Global Warming. Nisbet has impeccable academic credentials (senior editor at Oxford University Press's *Research Encyclopedia Climate Science*; former visiting fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government; etc.), and he receives funding from left-of-center donors like the MacArthur Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, and more.

WHO IS BRULLE?

Hard science—physical science—is rooted in experiments and measurements that can be tested, that scientists can replicate or fail to replicate. Social science is more subjective, the data more open to interpretation, the analysis more open to the challenge that the conclusions represent mere opinion rather than cold, hard fact.

That's why it matters that Brulle freely mixes science with his political opinions.

Brulle received his Master's degree in sociology from the notoriously left-wing New School for Social Research. (Its debate director said the school continues a tradition of "synthesizing leftist American intellectual thought and critical European philosophy.")²⁷ His sociology Ph.D. is from George Washington University, and he also has a Master's in natural resources from the University of Michigan. As a sociologist, he has done important work, particularly in his research on the environmentalist movement. He has been quoted by major

newspapers over the years on such topics as the split between activists who work within the system and their more radical compatriots; the appeal of environmentalism to some evangelical Christians; and the structure of the network of “green” organizations. In a 2007 article in the *New Republic*, Brulle was quoted chastising Fred Krupp of the Environmental Defense Fund as someone who, in the 1980s, took his place on “the right side of the room” within the environmentalist movement.²⁸

A 2010 article in *E: The Environmental Magazine* quotes Brulle criticizing some groups for their top-down approach: “Try to go to a meeting of the Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, or Greenpeace. You can’t, because they don’t have them.”²⁹ *Politico* in 2011 noted that Brulle has criticized the “green” movement’s reliance on foundation money.³⁰ Brulle is an environmental activist as well as an academic. According to *E* magazine, he participated as a high school student in the first Earth Day in 1970.³¹ A 2002 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article on an environmentalist protest at Valley Forge called him “a member of the local Sierra Club” involved in the protest.³² In a 2009 op-ed in *Newsday*, Brulle commented on the coming-to-power of President Obama and a Democratic Congress: “Have we finally overcome the gap between what is necessary to save the planet and what we are willing to undertake politically?... Unfortunately, I don’t believe so.” Brulle claimed that, to stave off disaster by meeting the targets set by a United Nations panel, the U.S. “will need to reduce its carbon-dioxide emissions by more than 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, and by 80 percent by 2050—an enormous social, economic and technological task.” Alas, Brulle wrote, “Opposition to strong measures, such as a carbon tax, is high in the public and Congress. In a 2009 Gallup poll, 81 percent opposed a policy that would ‘increase taxes on electricity so people use less of it.’ But it is impossible to imagine significant reductions in carbon emissions that do not entail increased energy costs.”

He lamented that, as Al Gore had observed, “What is scientifically necessary seems to be politically impossible.”

“But it isn’t always,” Brulle wrote hopefully. “The history of the environmental movement shows we can and have generated significant improvements. In the 1960s and 1970s, popular books by scientists including Rachel Carson, Barry Commoner and Paul Ehrlich helped the average person understand the links among environmental degradation, ecosystem processes and human health.”³³ It is a window into Brulle’s thinking that he points to Carson, Commoner, and Ehrlich as role models. That list includes two of the most infamous, discredited scientist-activists of the 20th Century—Carson, whose fake analysis led to the global ban on DDT that has caused millions of deaths from malaria, and Ehrlich, whose absurd visions of a “population bomb” laid the foundation for China’s horrific One Child policy.³⁴ The third icon listed by Brulle, Barry Commoner, was far better known as a political activist and “eco-socialist” presidential candidate than as a scientist.

“Carson and Ehrlich, two of the most infamous, discredited scientist-activists of the 20th Century.”

Brulle added that the public needed to be made aware of “dramatic, global threats” and of the fact that “personal sacrifices (such as a substantial carbon tax) will be required.” Environmentalists must emulate Martin Luther King Jr., who “appealed to our sense of justice in the face of injustice and offered a vision of an alternative social order.”³⁵ Brulle’s views on the need to change society apparently have not changed over the years. In a 2015 press release from Drexel University, he called for the greater involvement of sociologists in the climate change cause, in order to “answer questions like, how can we change our culture of consumption, how will we respond to extreme

weather events caused by climate change and how do we bridge the political divide on this issue.” Referring to a book co-edited by Brulle, the press release declared:

*According to the authors, an improved understanding of the complex relationship between climate change and society is essential for modifying ecologically harmful human behaviors and institutional practices, creating just and effective environmental policies and developing a more sustainable future.*³⁶

By the way, the book was produced by the American Sociological Association’s Task Force on Sociology and Global Climate Change. Because if there’s anyone qualified to debate matters of climatology and geophysics, it’s sociologists—right? (Or maybe medical doctors and biologists. The British medical journal *The Lancet*, known for its tobacco Prohibitionist and anti-Israel views, created a commission on Health and Climate Change to promote, as if it were science, the view that “to avoid the risk of potentially catastrophic climate change impacts requires total anthropogenic carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions to be kept below 2900 billion tonnes by the end of the century”—not a calculation that physicians, biologists, and the like are particularly qualified to make.)³⁷ Interestingly, of the 38 “environmental sociologists,” living and dead, included in that category by Wikipedia, a total of three are listed as having received advanced degrees in the physical sciences—counting natural resources, forestry, and environmental science as physical science. One (Brulle) has an M.S. in natural resources. Another has a Master’s degree in environmental studies, and a third has a Master’s in forestry and environmental studies. In addition, one has an unspecified “degree in chemical engineering,” one “studied the science of plant diseases,” one has a Bachelor’s degree in chemistry (that is, he graduated from college with a major in chemistry), and one has a Bachelor’s degree in forestry and

outdoor recreation. Although it’s possible that Wikipedia left something out, it’s clear that the level of academic expertise on the science of climate change possessed by “environmental sociologists” is barely above that of people randomly selected from the population. Like everyone else, they’re entitled to their opinions on the topic, but not to “expert” status. And one is entitled to suspect that some of those degrees represent less hard science than training in “social justice” advocacy. For instance, the school where Brulle earned his Master’s in natural resources, brags on its website³⁸ about its alumni’s work for politicized advocacy groups like the Environmental Defense Fund, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice.

SCIENCE = MANIPULATING PUBLIC OPINION

What explains the involvement in the Global Warming/Climate Change controversy of sociologists and others who lack any special qualifications for dealing with the issue? For an answer, let us examine the political advocacy carried out by Brulle and his allies.

The University of Oregon declared in a 2012 press release, “Resistance at individual and societal levels must be recognized and treated before real action can be taken to effectively address threats facing the planet from human-caused contributions to climate change.” Announcing a conference led by associate professor Kari Marie Norgaard, a collaborator with Brulle, the press release quoted Norgaard: “Just as we cannot overhaul a car fleet overnight, we cannot change our ideological superstructure overnight. We must first be aware that this resistance is happening at all levels of our society.”³⁹ Climate change is a social problem, Brulle explained in yet another press release. “If you want to deal with climate change, you have to deal with human behavior.” That quote comes from a Drexel University press

release which declared in its headline that “Climate Change is a ‘People Problem.’”⁴⁰ Writing in *Nature Climate Change* (September 24, 2015), Brulle and a co-author suggested that Pope Francis, who had called for a “dialogue” on climate change, could provide a “rhetoric of change” provoking “moral visions, conversations and deliberations about where society needs to go.... Moreover, social scientists need to engage in this effort more fully. The moral task at hand demands it.”⁴¹

Thus, it is imperative for human beings to develop “an alternative social order,” to “change our culture of consumption,” and to “modify ecologically harmful human behaviors.” It’s “the moral task at hand.” When a scientist declares, as Brulle did in that *Newsday* op-ed, that we “must do what is necessary to save the planet” and that activists need to present “dramatic, global threats” to persuade people to make great sacrifices and move toward that “alternative social order,” his work is properly subject to the scrutiny applied to commentary by political activists. His claims must be treated with appropriate skepticism, particularly when he ventures outside the realm of objective science and into the pandemonium of politics and public affairs.⁴² In politics, frustrated people often find comfort in conspiratorial beliefs. In their minds, defeat can’t be the result of a fair fight (much less of a fight that is rigged in their own favor). Defeat can’t be due to bad luck. It certainly can’t be due to their own failings. Only one thing can explain their defeat: the machinations of evil men in a nefarious conspiracy.

“Only one thing can explain their defeat: the machinations of evil men in a nefarious conspiracy.”

In his writings, Brulle often uses the term “climate denial” to describe the views of skeptics of climate change environmentalism. That’s a term with a pedigree—a callback to “Holocaust denial,” which

refers to the claims by Nazi sympathisers and other kooks that the Holocaust never happened. Brulle also likens “deniers” to the tobacco companies that, for years, denied that smoking causes lung cancer. (Never mind that the tobacco industry was promoted and subsidized by the U.S. government; that scientific experts were often less likely than the general public to believe smoking makes you sick; and that the environmentalist movement, with its claims that nearly all artificial chemicals cause disease, actually delayed recognition of the role of smoking in promoting disease.)

If you paint your adversaries as the moral equivalent of Nazi sympathizers and cigarette manufacturers, engaged in a massive conspiracy to stop you from saving the planet, then you can hardly be expected to maintain scientific objectivity.

When another college professor, Andrew Hoffman of the University of Michigan, suggested that environmentalists stop challenging people’s moral views directly and that they downplay tales of environmental catastrophe, Brulle said Hoffman was “looking for a third way out besides conflict. To define a way that says, ‘Well, we don’t have to have a power struggle here,’ is to sort of engage in a fanciful notion of how social order is created and maintained. I find that to be a politically naïve viewpoint. The stakes here are enormous. For the oil and gas industry, it is literally trillions of dollars of investments they’re protecting. The idea that they’re going to give this up without a fight is, I think, naïve.”⁴³ Last July, Brulle and co-author Timmons Roberts wrote approvingly of the prospect that, “if the Democrats gain the majority in the November election, they will probably investigate [oil, gas, and coal] firms and their front groups’ actions, and might recommend follow-up by the U.S. Attorney General.” Brulle and Roberts blamed the great conspiracy for “decades of inaction on climate change” and claimed that “Scholarly research shows that these institutes received nearly a billion dollars in funding to promulgate a series of neoliberal

causes, including misinformation on the causes and impacts of climate change.” (“Neoliberal” is a term used by the Left to denigrate liberals who favor aspects of free-market capitalism.)

“‘Neoliberal’ is a term used by the Left to denigrate liberals who favor aspects of free-market capitalism.”

Brulle and Roberts added, “Dragging the web of denial organizations into the light makes clear that these decades of inaction on climate change in the US Senate has [sic] not been by chance.... The issue of manipulation of public perception of science is reflective of a much larger problem in America today: political inequality has allowed vested interests to hijack and distort discourse and democratic governance, crippling our ability to act on the issues of our time.”⁴⁴ That same month, when Brulle received what was described as the “highest honor in American environmental sociology,” there was no denial that the award was partly political. One of Brulle’s nominators, the aforementioned Kari Norgaard, declared that “Dr. Brulle deserves this award for his brilliance as a scholar,” for his generosity and collegiality, and “for his courage to take on the oil and gas industry.” Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-Rhode Island), currently the Senate’s most vehement proponent of left-wing views on climate change, was quoted in Drexel University’s press release on the award, asserting that Brulle was one of “very few academics [who] have the courage or capacity to stand up to such a powerful and relentless industry.”⁴⁵ Just don’t accuse Brulle of being biased, like those deniers.

THE THREAT TO SCIENCE

The biggest danger represented by Brulle and other Great Global Warming Conspiracy theorists is that, as they work to discredit their adversaries and ban them from the public debate, they attack science itself.

Science cannot function if skeptics are harassed, ostracized, denied employment, and threatened by public officials, based on their supposed role in an insidious conspiracy. Skepticism is central to legitimate scientific inquiry and is only the enemy of false science.

The existence of bias is presumed in all scientific work. At the very least, a scientist is biased by the desire to be proven right. Being proven right—or *seeming* to be proven right—leads to greater income and respect, to tenure and lucrative consultancies, and to satisfaction with one’s own work. So it’s only human for any scientist’s work to reflect some degree of bias. That’s why good science is like good journalism in that skepticism is the order of the day, as expressed in the reporter’s rule, “If your mother says she loves you, check it out.”

Science is not rooted in “consensus” or other assumptions; it’s rooted in replicable research and experimentation. Generally, here’s how it works: A scientist examines an existing set of facts and concocts a theory that explains those facts. He or she makes a prediction to test that theory. If the prediction comes true, that constitutes evidence to support the theory. If the prediction fails, that undermines the theory, and the scientist goes back to the drawing board.

Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity met, and passed, its first major test in 1919, when a solar eclipse provided an opportunity to observe the apparent bending of light (actually, the warp of spacetime) by the mass of the sun. During the eclipse, scientists positioned off the coast of Brazil and on an island off the west coast of Africa examined the position of the stars in the sky and determined that predictions based on Einstein’s theory were correct. The accuracy of the predictions fundamentally changed our understanding of gravity.

The scientific reaction to Einstein's theory should have had nothing to do with Einstein's politics, or the source of his income or other funding, or his religious or ethnic background, or any other extraneous factor. But that didn't stop some German physicists from supporting "Arische Physik" (Aryan physics) over the "Jüdische Physik" (Jewish physics) of Einstein and others, on the ground that Jewish physicists were part of a great Jewish conspiracy. What foolishness!

"German physicists supported Aryan physics over the Jewish physics on the ground that Jewish physicists were part of a great Jewish conspiracy."

In real science, it doesn't matter whether a scientist is on the payroll of the American Cancer Society or a tobacco company, whether he is a Communist, or a Jew or a Baptist, or whether she beats her spouse, or whether he volunteers at a soup kitchen or steals from the church poor box. Only the evidence counts—especially, the results when predictions are tested.

As it happens, believers in apocalyptic climate changes have made a number of predictions that have failed to prove true over the last century. [The nearby sidebar](#), has more examples, but here are a few favorites:

- In 1969, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the future U.S. Senator (D-New York), warned his colleagues in the Nixon White House about scientists' Global Warming prediction that New York City and Washington would be under water by the Year 2000.⁴⁶
- In 2008, ABC News predicted New York under water by 2015, on the basis of interviews with persons still active in the climate debate like physicist James Hansen and Obama science advisor John Holdren.⁴⁷

- In the 1970s, many scientists predicted disastrous cooling; for example, "Scientist predicts a new ice age by 21st century," Boston Globe, April 16, 1970.
- The 1930s saw scientists predicting warming: "Next Great Deluge Forecast by Science: Melting Polar Ice Caps to Raise the Level of Seas and Flood the Continents," New York Times, May 15, 1932.⁴⁸
- Scientists in the 1890s predicted a new ice age: "Prospects of Another Glacial Period," New York Times, February 24, 1895.⁴⁹

There's a rhetorical trope popular among environmentalists that being skeptical about Global Warming/Climate Change theory is like being skeptical about gravity. Actually, scientists continue to debate the nature of gravity, as reflected in this headline last November on the respected science website Phys.org: "New theory of gravity might explain dark matter." Of course, the most famous skeptic about gravity was Albert Einstein, who successfully challenged the scientific consensus on gravity theory in his day. Einstein understood that it is cold, hard fact, not a consensus generated by intimidation or groupthink, that is the goal of science. When he was told of a publication entitled, 100 Authors Against Einstein, he reputedly said, "Why one hundred? If I were wrong, one would have been enough."

"The most famous skeptic about gravity was Albert Einstein, who successfully challenged the scientific consensus on gravity theory."

If Global Warming skeptics are wrong, no conspiracy will prove them right. If they are correct, those attempting to silence them will go down in history alongside the members of the "scientific communities" that promoted the idea of a geocentric universe, the impossibility

of continental drift, and the existence of canals on Mars, to say nothing of the many scientists who claimed science justified such evils as white supremacy, eugenics, and Prohibition.

You would think that scientists would be aware of the danger of mixing their science with politics, but it seems each generation has to learn that lesson all over again.

CORRECTING BRULLE'S NUMBERS

In our examination of Brulle's claims about the size of The Conspiracy, or, as he calls it, the CCCM (Climate Change Counter Movement), we at the Capital Research Center examined Brulle's list of 91 organizations for 2010, the most recent year he studied. To determine the degree each group focused on climate issues, we looked at several factors: first, the specific amount of spending on climate or energy and environment issues, if that was specified on the group's IRS filing; organizations' profiles by the news media and opposition-research organizations; mentions in the Lexis-Nexis news database and on the Web as reported by Google; and the groups' own websites, annual reports, and other publications. We tried to contact spokesmen for the organizations, and when we succeeded we compared their claims to the available evidence. (We acknowledge that some groups may have changed their focus since the 2003-2010 period covered by the Brulle study, but we do not believe such changes significantly affect the ratio of the groups' effort on the climate change issue relative to their efforts in general.)

We determined that only a small percentage—perhaps five or six percent—of these organizations' work is devoted to engaging the public on the science of Global Warming/Climate Change.

“Only a small percentage of these organizations' work is devoted to engaging the public on the science of Global Warming/Climate Change.”

For example, Brulle listed the Intermountain Rural Electric Association (IREA), a customer-owned, nonprofit electric company, as a member of The Conspiracy, and included in his Number every penny of IREA's 2010 revenues of \$246.5 million, which made the group, according to professor Brulle's dubious social science, the largest Conspirator by far, single-handedly responsible for about 21 percent of the Brulle Number for 2010. What did the humble co-op members of IREA, headquartered in Sedalia, Colorado (2010 population: 206), have to do to be accused of leading a global effort to “manipulate and mislead the public”? Well, in 2006 the group provided \$100,000 to support the work of Patrick Michaels, one of the country's most distinguished climatologists and a prominent skeptic, and in general IREA opposes measures that drive up electricity costs for customers, such as requirements for the use of high-cost non-carbon energy. That seems to sum up IREA's involvement in the Conspiracy. (Its \$100,000 grant equalled 0.05% of IREA's revenues for 2006, according to Brulle's data.)

Similar distortions are found when one examines the American Farm Bureau Federation (\$36 million in 2010 revenues) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (\$199 million). Each of those organizations represents a particular constituency with a wide range of interests; each takes public positions or seeks to influence political leaders on many issues, most of them unrelated to Global Warming/Climate Change. Brulle claims to be concerned with how the groups on his list have confused Americans about climate science, but groups like the American Farm Bureau Federation or Chamber of Commerce have rarely weighed

in on the science disputes involved. The most one could say is that these sorts of groups have opposed specific legislation, such as carbon taxes or drilling bans, that Brulle wants politicians to enact into law.⁵⁰ This opposition may explain a lot about Brulle's motivations, and it definitely shows that he's more interested in political victories than science, but it says nothing about how Americans form their views of the science of Global Warming. Indeed, over 72 percent of the Brulle Number for 2010 is accounted for by 501(c)(5) and (c)(6) organizations such as boards of trade, business leagues, and chambers of commerce. By law, such groups "are not organized for profit" and no part of their net earnings may benefit "any private shareholder or individual." Most people who work for or have contact with these groups would be quite surprised to see them listed as part of a conspiracy to cover up the truth about climate change, much less to see someone imply that all of the groups' revenues are spent on climate science.

COUNTING ALLIES AS ENEMIES

Yet another large issue complicates Brulle's claims: he says the defining characteristic of the Conspirators is an effort to block "legislative restrictions on carbon emissions." Yet it's easy to show that many of the groups Brulle identifies as conspiring against this goal have in fact supported carbon taxes, which means they don't belong on his list in the first place. Scholars at the American Enterprise Institute, for example, both during the period he studied and more recently, have advocated in their own studies and at conferences, not to mention in the mainstream media, in favor of a carbon tax. In fact, skeptics have protested AEI events!⁵¹ Under Brulle's parameters, AEI should have been removed from the analysis, and its millions in income cut from the Brulle Number altogether, yet he counted \$264 million in AEI revenues in his study.

Clearly, many supposedly conservative or skeptical groups not only fail to challenge the alarmist view of climate change, they even endorse significant parts of alarmism and often go so far as to support the very political actions that Brulle most greatly desires. The Chamber of Commerce, for example, specifically backs "sensible approaches to reducing greenhouse gas emissions." The Niskanen Center, which calls itself a libertarian think tank, has a Center for Climate Science directed by Dr. Joseph Majkut, a climatologist who previously served on the staff of Brulle's ally Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse.⁵² The think tank R Street is so well known for its friendliness to a carbon tax that when we published a study critical of the carbon tax, we invited it to contribute a defense of the tax.⁵³ And as the present study goes to press, prominent Republicans at the Hoover Institution like George Schultz and James Baker are advocating vigorously for a carbon tax.⁵⁴ Any honest, unbiased researcher would laugh at the suggestion that 100% of the revenues of numerous other groups on Brulle's list are dedicated to critiques of Global Warming. For instance, the Reason Foundation (\$7.2 million) is on Brulle's list, despite the fact that its top writer on science issues shares some of environmentalists' views on Global Warming/Climate Change.

The Cato Institute (\$40 million) represents a libertarian point of view, and the Heritage Foundation (\$78 million) and the American Conservative Union Foundation (\$1.4 million) represent a conservative point of view, but all three of these groups deal with a vast array of issues, not just Global Warming or the wider field of energy and the environment (E&E).

Cato, for example, has scholars working on education and child policy, finance and banking, foreign policy and national security, healthcare and welfare, telecom and Internet policy, civil liberties, immigration, welfare, Social Security, and other issues. Its Center for the Study of Science, directed by the aforementioned Patrick Michaels, does deal

with Global Warming as well as other scientific issues, but it's one of 12 centers or major projects that are affiliated with Cato. Only about three of the organization's 70 top experts appear to spend much of their time on the issue.

Heritage, which has a staff of nearly 300, lists five experts on climate change, including one specialist and four more who also deal with other issues such as agriculture and government regulation.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute (\$4.25 million) is another group that supports free-market and libertarian ideas. Brulle understandably lists CEI as part of the alleged Conspiracy, because CEI is quite prominent in the debate. It runs a blog on the issue and hosts a monthly meeting of skeptical experts, and a CEI expert led the Trump transition team dealing with Energy and Environment. Yet even in the case of CEI, the Brulle Number represents a large distortion. Only about one-seventh of the CEI experts listed on its website are tied to the issue, and energy and the environment is one of 12 major issue areas with which CEI deals.

Likewise for Freedom Works and the Freedom Works Foundation (combined, \$13.7 million in 2010). Freedom Works, a libertarian group that was closely associated with the Tea Party movement, lists energy and the environment as one of its 15 issue areas. The National Taxpayers Union and the NTU Foundation (combined, \$3.5 million) deal almost exclusively with tax issues, government spending, and government waste, rarely with energy and the environment. The Media Research Center (\$12.6 million) deals with every controversial issue discussed in the news media; it exerts perhaps five percent of its efforts on all Energy and Environment issues combined.

Other members of Brulle's Conspiracy are similarly varied in their issue focus. The Hudson Institute (\$9.8 million) has one visiting fellow dealing with Global Warming/Climate Change out of approximately 100 experts listed on its website.

As its name would suggest, the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace deals rarely with the issue. (Brulle, in his study, did not list revenues for Hoover, because its finances are legally part of Stanford University and it doesn't file its own IRS report, but we estimate its 2010 revenues at approximately \$39.4 million.)

According to a spokesman, the Cascade Policy Institute (\$988,000) had a single economist working on the issue in 2010, and none since. The Independent Institute (\$2.65 million) "hasn't done much on the issue since 2009 or so," according to a source familiar with the organization, who added: "Maybe two percent of the Institute's effort is on Global Warming, maybe seven percent if you count all environmental issues."

A spokesman for the John Locke Foundation (\$3.9 million) said its involvement in the issue consists of an occasional blog post and that it currently devotes less than half a percent of its efforts to anything related to climate change. He said the level of involvement was perhaps two or three percent in 2010. A spokesperson told us that the Landmark Legal Foundation (\$3 million) "doesn't deal with the issue at all." The Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy (\$306,000) hosts two annual conferences on Global Warming and Energy and Environment, paying for hotel rooms for some participants, but a spokesperson said that that constitutes only about 20 percent of its total effort. A Washington Policy Center (\$1.5 million) spokesman put its effort at "approximately one percent." We could find no significant evidence to contradict the claims made by the spokesmen for those groups.

The Congress of Racial Equality, New York chapter (\$205,000), is a civil rights organization that deals with such issues as financial literacy and job training. 60 Plus (\$16 million) is a senior citizens organization that supports conservative and free-market ideas and, on some occasions, sharply criticizes the positions taken by climate change

activists. The Independent Women's Forum (\$859,000) is a conservative women's group that, on its website, does not even list Energy and Environment as a major topic; it's a subtopic under "culture of alarmism."

Some of the groups that Brulle lists as part of the Conspiracy—with, remember, 100 percent of their revenues counting toward the Brulle number—are difficult to classify. They fall in the middle between explicit opposition to Global Warming/Climate Change activism and a more general support for affordable energy. Citizens for Affordable Energy (\$315,000) promotes an all-of-the-above approach to the U.S. energy supply, and, on one page of its website, does promote a book by prominent skeptic Chris Horner, but otherwise avoids the Warming issue. The Consumer Energy Alliance (\$737,000) and the Industrial Energy Consumers of America (\$8.7 million) also support cheap energy, with no explicit opposition to left-wing views on Warming.

The American Gas Association (\$25 million) also declines to challenge left-wing Global Warming beliefs. (Its ambivalence is understandable. Given that natural gas is seen as an alternative to more carbon-intensive fuels, people's fears about climate sometimes work to the advantage of the natural gas industry.) Likewise, the American Natural Gas Alliance (\$88 million) seems to work mainly on advertising and public-relations efforts to promote fracking or the use of natural gas rather than other fuels, and the group takes no obvious position on Global Warming/Climate Change. The World Coal Association (\$1.5 million) does not appear to openly challenge environmentalists on the issue.

The Institute for Energy Research (\$2.4 million) focuses on Energy and Environment issues, but its range of interests extends well beyond climate matters. Besides climate change, the carbon tax, and cap-and-trade, IER's areas include the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the rise of China, the cost of electricity generation through new and existing

technologies, electronic vehicles, fuel economy mandates, the Renewable Fuel Standard, "green jobs" and "green pricing programs," the Keystone XL pipeline and other pipelines, drilling in the Gulf of Mexico and on the Outer Continental Shelf, liquid natural gas, and the wind Production Tax Credit.

The Association of Global Automobile Manufacturers (\$5.9 million) seeks to "lessen the nation's reliance on fossil fuels" and to "reduce CO2 emissions"—hardly signs it is a hardcore "denial" group.

Then there's the American Coalition for Clean Coal Energy (\$45 million), which focuses on the promotion of clean coal technology, something that is needed only because of the desire to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. If no one believed in Global Warming theory, this organization wouldn't even exist. In a similar vein, the American Coal Foundation (\$312,000) brags about progress in "near-zero emissions technology" such as clean coal and carbon capture, and does not challenge Climate Change beliefs. The Edison Electric Institute (\$82 million), a supposed member of the conspiracy exposed by Brulle, declares that "Global climate change presents one of the biggest... challenges the country has ever faced."

Again, is it fair and accurate to include the total revenues of all these groups in the Brulle Number? If, as Brulle declares, these groups are all "fronts" (his word) for oil, gas, and coal companies, those carbon-fuel companies are more devious than we thought, because they managed to completely take over, and turn to their advantage, national organizations with long histories like the Chamber of Commerce, the Farm Bureau, and the Heritage Foundation—major national organizations that were advising Presidents long before Global Warming/Climate Change was ever heard of.

“If these groups are all ‘fronts’ for oil, gas, and coal companies, those carbon-fuel companies are more devious than we thought.”

We should note that Brulle lists the Capital Research Center as a Conspirator, and we have indeed received support over the years from his two *bêtes noires*, Exxon and Koch-related philanthropies. But Exxon stopped giving to us a decade ago, and funders interested in climate change issues have never provided as much as ten percent of our annual revenues. Nor have we ever devoted as much as ten percent of our spending to climate science.

A NOTE ON OUR METHODS

As we calculated our ratings—our measure of how much of each group’s effort went to Energy and Environment and Global Warming/Climate Change—we sought to err on the side of Brulle. If an organization publicly expressed a skeptical view on the issue, or consistently aligned politically with those who did, we counted any efforts on energy and environmental issues as linked, however peripherally, to Global Warming/Climate Change. Those issues include the building of oil and gas pipelines, cap-and-trade, the carbon tax, requirements for the use of “renewable fuels,” and many others. If, on the other hand, an organization took no clear position or seemed to accept Climate Change-related policies as an unavoidable reality, we were less likely to give it a high rating for involvement on Climate Change.

Our analysis is not perfect. It is often impossible from the outside to determine how much of an organization’s effort is devoted to a particular issue. Often, even people inside the organization don’t know.

We encourage others to attempt a similar analysis, and welcome criticism or comments that might lead us to alter our ratings. Our complete data, including our “Allen Index” indicating our best estimate of the proportion of the group’s efforts that went anywhere in the direction of skepticism on Global Warming and Climate Change science, is available [here](#).

Unlike Brulle and many others for whom the climate change issue is a major cause, *we encourage discussion and debate*. We do not believe that Brulle and his compatriots are part of a conspiracy that must be quashed. Nor do we believe that our adversaries lack First Amendment rights, or that they should be jailed.

We wish they afforded us the same respect.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹See Robert J. Brulle, "Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of U.S. climate change counter-movement organizations," *Climatic Change* 122, no. 4 (February 2014).
- ²"More Say There Is Solid Evidence of Global Warming," *The Pew Research Center*, October 15, 2012.
- ³National Research Council. "America's Climate Choices." *The National Academies Press* (2011), 35.
- ⁴Memo, Daniel P. Moynihan to John Ehrlichman, Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs, July 15, 1972, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum.
- ⁵National Research Council. "America's Climate Choices." *The National Academies Press* (2011), 35.
- ⁶Robert Brulle and Timmons Roberts, "Whitehouse, colleagues expose web of climate denial," *The Westerly Sun* (RI), Aug. 17, 2016.
- ⁷https://static-content.springer.com/esm/art%3A10.1007%2Fs10584-013-1018-7/MediaObjects/10584_2013_1018_MOESM1_ESM.pdf
- ⁸Brulle, "Institutionalizing delay," table 1.
- ⁹U.S., Congress, Senate. Senator Whitehouse floor speech, "Time to Wake Up: Touched a Nerve," October 25, 2015.
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U.S. GOVERNMENT FUNDING OF CLIMATE CHANGE

BY KENNETH HAAPALA

As the nearby “Short History of Global Warming Fears” explains, the idea that mankind’s emissions of carbon dioxide will lead to catastrophic global warming was popularized in 1979 through the “Charney Report.” Since then, scientists have failed to find much physical evidence to support the report’s assumptions, but that failure has not stemmed from any lack of taxpayer support of research that looks for such evidence. The United States government has spent enormous sums on global warming/climate change issues, including science research, although the ocean of funding is so large, fed by so many rivers of tax dollars, that it’s hard to tally it all up.

Not all of this government funding goes to advocacy of climate alarmism, of course. But it would be hard for the federal government to spend *billions* of dollars a year on a controversial topic, with every penny of the spending based on the presumption that global warming is a serious crisis worthy of billions of tax dollars, and not have those billions make a powerful impression on the public. The persons in the public who would be most powerfully affected would be those hoping to obtain grants for their research, tax subsidies for their businesses, or otherwise seeking to benefit from going along with the presumption that a crisis exists. Tens of billions of dollars are not exactly a small incentive, and as Robert Brulle said in the press release for his study, “Money amplifies certain voices above others and, in effect, gives them a megaphone in the public square.”

“Money amplifies certain voices above others and, in effect, gives them a megaphone in the public square.”

The data provided here come primarily from two government sources: (1) the Government Accountability Office (GAO), using data from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB); and (2) the Congressional Research Service (CRS). The GAO report covers Fiscal Years 1993 to 2010¹; the CRS report covers FY 2008 to 2014 (with FY 2014 estimated)². The funding expenditures not only include regular annual budgeted amounts, but also large additional funding provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), also known as the “Stimulus Bill,” signed into law by President Obama in 2009. The Stimulus sent more than \$26.1 billion in funding toward climate change programs, of which the GAO estimates about 2.5 percent, or \$641 million, went to climate science.

Accounting for all these government billions is further complicated by international transfers from various U.S. government entities to international groups like the U.N. In 2016, questions arose in Congress about the legality of recent transfers, such as those sent to the U.N. Green Climate Fund. But my analysis will stop as of September 30, 2016, the end of FY 2016, before serious questions were raised about such transfers.

Additional complications arise from the various definitions of spending included in the reports. For example, the summary of the 2011 GAO report states: “OMB reports funding in four categories: technology to reduce emissions, science to better understand climate change, international assistance for developing countries, and wildlife adaptation to respond to actual or expected changes.”

In addition, the summary reports that there are no clear definitions across agencies. Thus, the estimates are educated guesses, at best. I group these educated guesses of expenditures into two categories: (1) climate science; and (2) “other,” including efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and their presumed, but not demonstrated, effects.

More uncertainty in the numbers arises from the fact that the GAO report is based on a survey conducted from August 6, 2010, to September 24, 2010. “Of the 106 officials who were asked to participate, 73 responded to the questionnaire, for a response rate of about 69 percent.”

Several types of funding are covered in the broad classification of federal expenditures. Actual funding, or cash outlays, is a fairly clear type of support, and for this analysis, the actual or the enacted budget authority is used, except for 2014, where the requested amount is used.

But less clear are the second and third categories of federal support, because they involve so-called tax expenditures. Tax expenditures are estimates of revenues the government “loses” when the tax code allows taxpayers to reduce gross income with specific deductions to arrive at adjusted gross income. (That’s why economists typically say that the largest U.S. tax expenditure is the mortgage deduction for personal homes.) Of course, these kinds of “expenditures” are generally not transferable and simply reduce the income that citizens report, which may or may not reduce anyone’s tax bill.

Another form of tax expenditures are federal tax credits, which can be transferable. Generally, tax credits are used by corporations with large federal tax burdens to directly reduce the taxes they pay. In this analysis, I will calculate federal revenues lost, largely from tax credits, according to the numbers in the government reports from the GAO and CRS. These “expenditures” fall into the category of

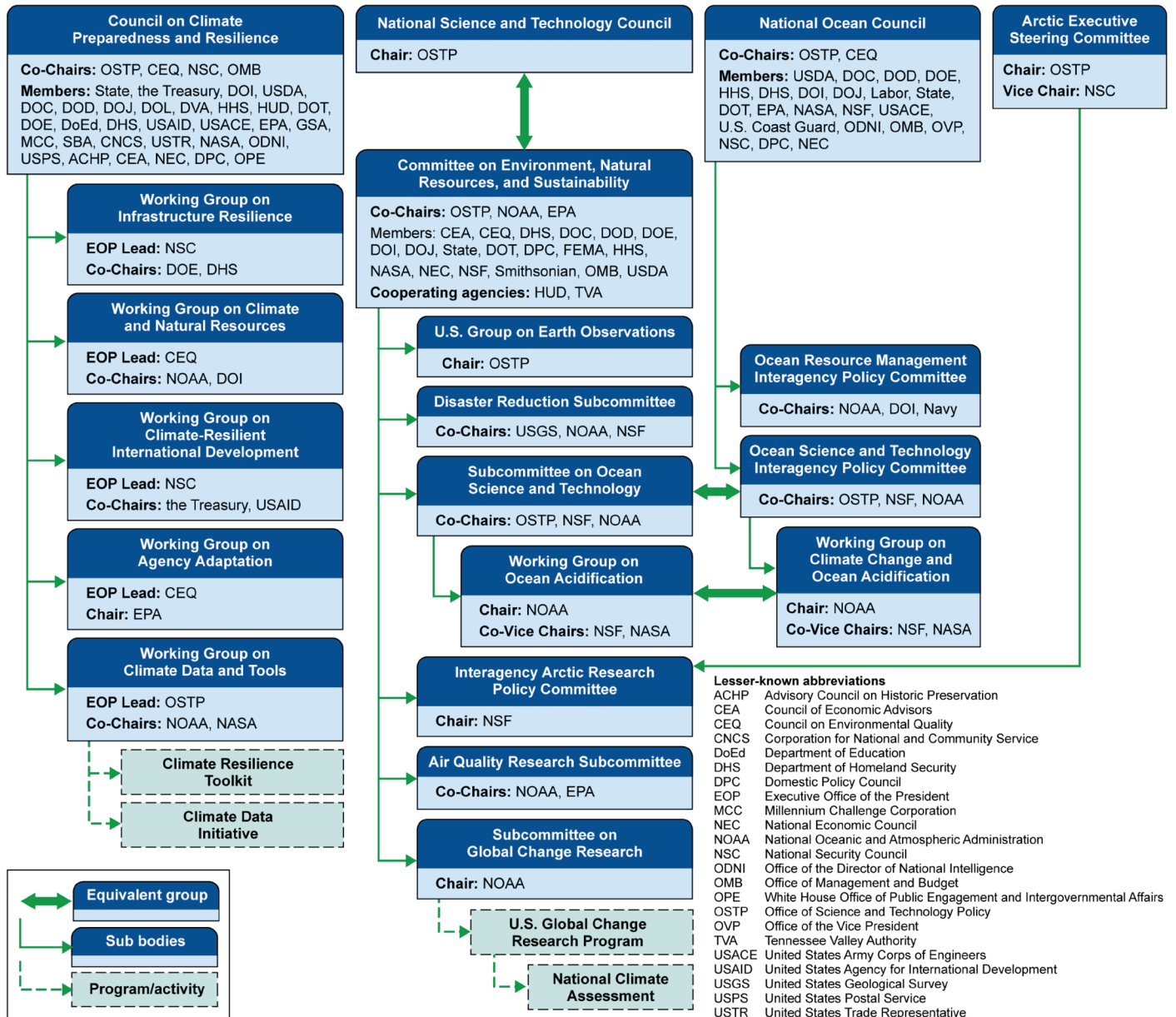
“other”—efforts to reduce greenhouse gases and their presumed effects. They are not included in the Climate Science.

No reports to Congress from a government agency were found for the periods after FY 2014, which ended on September 30, 2014. The amount for FY 2014 is an estimate, and to cover FY 2015 and 2016, one must examine agency budgets, a tedious process. Further, in recent years the accounting for many agencies has become obtuse, with monies moving among entities for various purposes without notification to Congress. The complications are made worse because there have been no rigorous government agency audits in several decades. A 2015 report from the GAO³ states:

“Three major impediments prevented GAO from rendering an opinion on the federal government’s accrual-based consolidated financial statements: (1) serious financial management problems at the Department of Defense (DOD), (2) the federal government’s inability to adequately account for and reconcile intragovernmental activity and balances between federal entities, and (3) the federal government’s ineffective process for preparing the consolidated financial statements. Efforts are under way to resolve these issues, but strong and sustained commitment by DOD and other federal entities as well as continued leadership by the Department of the Treasury (Treasury) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) are necessary to implement needed improvements.”

This pathetic status of government accounting limits the reporting of federal expenditures on climate issues for years after FY 2013, which is why the numbers provided here for FY 2014 are estimated. After 2014, the budget for climate science spending by one entity is available: the U.S. Global Change Research Program⁴. The expenditures of other government entities are clouded, and so for climate science only a minimum

Figure 1: Selected Coordination Mechanisms for Federal Climate Change Activities



Source: Executive Office of the President. | GAO-16-37

Note: The dashed boxes reflect government-wide programs and activities related to climate information

expenditure can be established—the actual amount may be significantly greater. For other climate change programs, the amounts are not generally available.

THE NUMBERS

From FY 1993 to FY 2014, government reports show that annual spending on “climate science” grew from \$1.31 billion to \$2.66 billion, for a total of \$42.49 billion. Of this total, \$0.64 billion came from the stimulus bill. Annual expenditures in this category over the period increased over 200 percent. During the same period, “other” climate-related expenditures (including tax credits) grew from \$1.05 billion to \$8.94 billion, for a total of \$104.29 billion, with \$25.5 billion coming from AARA. The increase in annual expenditures in this category was 850 percent.

If we combine both categories, total expenditures for the period grew from \$2.35 billion to \$11.59 billion, for a total of \$146.78 billion, with \$26.14 billion coming from ARRA. The increase in total annual expenditures was 490 percent.

The amount going to international assistance via U.N. groups grew from \$201 million to \$893 million in 2014—a 440 percent growth in annual expenditures.

When the budgets for FY 2015 & FY 2016 of the USGCRP⁵ are included, the total expenditures for “climate science” from FY 1993 to FY 2016 come to \$47.56 billion, with international assistance amounting to \$8.24 billion.

Constant Dollars: While the CRS report also gave the total annual expenditures of climate change in constant 2012 dollars, the GAO report did not give constant dollars. Since the index used by the CRS is not available on the web, I’ve used the Consumer Price Index from the Bureau of Labor Statistics to adjust GAO numbers to 2012 constant dollars⁶. To assure a reasonable adjustment, several calculations were double-checked with CRS numbers. The error in the match sets was less than 1 percent.

“In ‘fighting’ climate change, the United States government is spending almost as much as it did on all the Apollo missions.

CONCLUSION

After examining the reports, and removing double counting, calculations show that from FY 1993 to FY 2014 **total U.S. expenditures on climate change amount to more than \$166 billion in 2012 dollars.** By way of comparison, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the entire Apollo program, operating from 1962 to 1973 with 17 missions—seven of them sending men to the moon and back—cost \$170 billion in 2005 dollars⁷, which equals about \$200 billion in 2012 dollars, if we use the Consumer Price Index to adjust that figure. In “fighting” climate change, the United States government is spending almost as much as it did on all the Apollo missions.

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ENDNOTES

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