



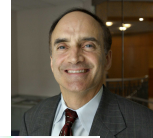
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## 10,000 Scientists in Seattle Want Data, Not Politics, to Drive Research And Policy

By Robert Weiner (Page 1 of 1 pages)



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By Robert Weiner and Zachary Filtz

During Valentine's Day weekend, February 13-16, ten thousand scientists are gathering in Seattle for the American Association for the Advancement of Science's annual meeting. The Trump Administration's policy of blocking data across the board including climate change unless it suits a theme is anathema to most. Sessions include the nation's experts who study and will provide updates on automation, artificial intelligence, space, brain science, cancer, climate, neurology of infants, breast cancer genes. The scientists want "just the facts, Ma'am" to quote Dragnet's Jack Webb, not politically driven forced fiction. Information technology giant and Microsoft founder Bill Gates is a keynote speakers for the conference. With high powered topics that impact the future, the conference's theme for this year is Envisioning Tomorrow's Earth.

Science needs data. The Australian Academy of Science found that among more than 500 professional astronomers, fully a quarter of their research effort was "computational." No one wins by treating science, technology and engineering skills as only used by second-class citizens, according to "The Conversation," an academic studies website. Big subjects like bioinformatics, computational linguistics and particle physics require computation. In this weekend's AAAS conference, be ready for a session on "Space Domain Prediction and Awareness" by Moriba Ja. University of Texas at Austin director for Computational Astronautical Sciences. Also participating is Dr. Patricia Berg of George Washington University, recently named a Fellow of AAAS. who at last year's annual meeting gave a talk on a new gene activated in 80% of women with breast cancer and 70% of men with prostate cancer.

Unfortunately, the need for more data-driven science has not seen the same type of audience in this President's White House.

This decade was just the hottest on record, with icebergs melting, oceans inching up, and carbon dioxide increasing. Yet the Trump Administration is still planning to follow through on withdrawing the United States from the Paris Climate Accord. Young voters and activists have consistently voiced their concerns about climate change and government inaction over the past decade. 16 year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg's book, "No One is Too Small to Make a Difference," is a New York Times #1 best seller. Thunberg was 2019 Time "Person of the Year."

The scientists in Seattle are distressed that the Trump administration have been dismantling climate policy since 2016 reversing much of what President Obama set out in the previous administration. After Trump announced the withdrawal, more than 11,000 scientists from across the world came together to declare a 'science emergency.' They announced a study called the "World Scientists' warning of a climate emergency." It is the first time a large group of scientists has formally come out in favor of labeling climate change as an "emergency."

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has also been used by the president to undermine scientific research and information, a step to dissolve climate science findings. The New York Times reported that "the EPA was worsening its proposal to exclude key scientific research from its decision making."

Only this year has the White House finally agreed to allow federally funded Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms studies on gun violence and deaths.

It's a start. Heads in the sand is not a policy. "Knowledge itself is power," Francis Bacon said back in 1597 in "Meditations." To "envision tomorrow's earth," having more data-driven, rather than just observational, science would help society make progress in all areas. Climate change-- which impacts the very future of Seattle and the world-- is just one area at stake.

*Robert Weiner was a Clinton and Bush White House spokesman, Chief of Staff of the House Aging Committee and Health Subcommittee, spokesman for the House Government Operations Committee, and senior staff for Congressmen John Conyers, Charles Rangel, Claude Pepper, Ed Koch and Sen. Edward Kennedy. Zachary Filtz is Senior Policy Analyst for Robert Weiner Associates and Solutions for Change. August Clarke also contributed to this article.*