

# Make Science And Health In America Great Again



By Hank Campbell — March 29, 2017



There has been a great deal of hyperbole and confusion about the recent and future direction of science and health in America, both in the applied and basic research sense, but for the public it's hard to separate what is a legitimate worry versus what has been manufactured due to lingering animosity over a contentious 2016 campaign season.

As usual, the loudest political activists have hijacked the discourse.

But not all scientists are on one side of the political aisle, and not everyone wants to march against the federal government based on guesses about what policy directions may be. Instead, many want to make a positive difference.

You don't need to be against something to be *for* something.

Among the public, the pro-science community is generally right-of-center whereas supporters of the groups scaremongering food, medicine and energy are invariably on the left. But we don't get into left and right here, we are scientists and doctors doing what the corporate Fourth Estate can't or won't do to protect the public. This is our seventh administration, some presidents have wanted our help on understanding science issues more and some have wanted it less. Regardless of the political party in power, we stand for the American people. We show the White House, Congress and the Courts how to get it right and we criticize them when they get it wrong, regardless of their affiliation.

We have been doing that for almost 40 years. Because some administrations have been more opposed to science than others, we have been asked why we don't call, in the phrase of Erasmus, "a spade a spade" about their politics.

In response, I'll paraphrase film studio magnate Louis B. Mayer, who responded to criticisms about why he didn't jump on the "horror movie" bandwagon of the 1930s with 'why reach two readers

when I can have four?' Mayer wanted to make movies the whole family could go to see, not just parents, and you want us to educate people across the political spectrum. By being trusted science and health guides for the public no matter where people are politically, we can do a lot more good.

There are challenges, that is why you, our donors and readers (want to switch from the latter to the former? [Donate here](#) <sup>[1]</sup>) are so important. Most people are not anti-science, they are just cautious. If someone claims 'Chemical X is causing cancer' and no one shows otherwise, people are going to invoke the precautionary principle and want to avoid it. Such chemophobia was overtaking culture when the Council was founded in 1978. Back then, if you believed litigation groups like Center for Science In The Public Interest (CSPI), eggs, bacon, toast, butter and coffee all caused heart attacks or cancer. They had declared war on all of breakfast.

The Council arrived and we showed the country it was safe to go into the refrigerator again. It wasn't a lucrative endeavor then - as ACSH co-founder Dr. Elizabeth Whelan noted, 'your food is safe is a terrible call to action' - and it is not lucrative now. Scaremongering, however, has become a \$1 billion per year industry.

So why doesn't the pro-science side have a \$1 billion a year counterpart to environmentalism?

We're working on that. As a first step, we have a new campaign for 2017, *Make Science In America Great Again*, and it puts us on the road to creating the largest pro-science consumer advocacy group in the nation. Just a generation ago, the American public had high levels of trust in science. Since 2000, with rampant politicization of science in academia, that trust has declined. But most science in America is not done in academia, 60 percent of basic research and about 100 percent of applied research is done by companies. And many academics, in areas like physical sciences and in agriculture, are just as abused by activist groups as any in the private sector.



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MAKE  
**SCIENCE IN AMERICA**  
GREAT AGAIN

This weekend is Earth Day, a day created to show support for environmentalist groups (we can ignore that they chose that particular date to honor Lenin's birthday) and on Earth Day this year, a group have scheduled a 'science march.' While they say the goal is supporting science, their messaging has instead been all over the place; it has [alternately been anti-Republican and for social engineering](#) [2] and for some science (climate change) but not other science (energy, agriculture, medicine.) One person in charge of their social media account [said ISIS terrorists were simply marginalized people that science was being weaponized against](#) [3] before another deleted the Tweet.

If they can't even represent each other accurately, how can they represent all scientists?

I am all for marches. As I always joke, invoking Billy Bragg, if there's a black list I want to be on it. The Council is fine going against the grain also. We have been marching on Washington, D.C. to support science for 39 years. But a lot of the groups claiming to support this march have been marching against science for just as long. Who's more opposed to science than Greenpeace? Yet they are a key sponsor of the event. That tells mainstream science advocates the goal of this is creating an ideological tone - if you support science you should deny science issues Greenpeace does and vote for a particular party.

Instead of marching for some science issues or against Republicans, let's encourage people to

start voting for candidates who accept science. Despite being a \$120 billion constituency, scientists don't vote for their own interests on science issues, the way Latinos or senior citizens do. Scientists may claim a science issue (e.g. global warming) is why they *won't* vote for a candidate, but how many in academic science didn't vote for one of the 53 Democrats (or 2 Republicans) in Congress [who tried to get mandatory warning labels on GMO foods](#) [4]? I have yet to find one. Food is a basic need, we can't opt out of it, so you can't be pro-science if you don't stand against the politicians who want to undermine our food supply and replace it with a naïve ideal that Greenpeace endorses.

It's time to move on from political campaigns and get back to the business of insuring that American science continues to lead the world. With just 5 percent of the population, we contribute 30 percent of the science knowledge. American adults lead the world in science literacy, even if people don't cast votes based on science issues the way they do on taxes or abortion or whatever.

In the 21st century, science acceptance will be more important than ever. At the Council, we're going to continue to be right out in front of that. But right now science is not how decisions are made and we must get that to change. People who insist they are showing up at a science march regardless of its nebulous political motivations should also be trying to make sure a new Congress and White House make positive, evidence-based decisions. You don't take a seat at the table only if your candidate wins.

So this April 22nd, let's think about science regardless of political beliefs. It's the opposite of what Earth Day stands for - but it is vital to our remaining a science superpower.

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[2] <http://acsh.org/news/2017/02/02/why-scientist-wont-be-attending-science-march-10811>

[3] <http://www.acsh.org/news/2017/04/13/hold-my-beer-march-science-defends-isis-marginalized-people-11131>

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