

# 314 Action Wants to Elect Scientists, But Only if They're Democrats



By Alex Berezow — February 22, 2018



Credit: 314 Action

The U.S. Congress is made up mostly of professional politicians and lawyers. This comes as a surprise to precisely no one, but the sheer numbers are rather striking.

According to the [Congressional Research Service](#) <sup>[1]</sup>(PDF, Table 2), the 115th Congress consists of 168 Representatives (out of 435) who are lawyers, and the Senate has 50 lawyers (out of 100). Combined, lawyers make up nearly 41% of Congress.

How many lawyers are in the U.S.? One law firm (with a [nifty interactive map](#) <sup>[2]</sup>!) estimates roughly 1.3 million. Given that the U.S. population is about 323 million, the number of lawyers as a percentage of the population is 0.4%. That means that lawyers are 100 times over-represented in Congress.

To be sure, we should expect lawyers to be slightly over-represented in politics. After all, their job involves the law, so their expertise can be used to fix old ones and create new ones. But where are the plumbers, architects, computer programmers, doctors, nurses, priests, police officers, and firefighters? Surely, our democracy would be better off if people from diverse backgrounds were responsible for crafting laws.

One group agrees with this. It's called 314 Action, and its mission is to elect scientists. But there is a catch.

## Science Help Wanted (No Republicans Need Apply)

314 Action's [stated mission](#) <sup>[3]</sup> is laudable. It includes, among other things, a desire to "elect more leaders... from STEM backgrounds" and to "strengthen communication among the STEM

community, the public and our elected officials." One would be left with the impression that the mission is bipartisan, which would be outstanding.

Unfortunately, it is not.

The [leadership](#) [4] are all Democrats. All the [candidates 314 Action has endorsed](#) [5] are Democrats. The site's [news page](#) [6] refers to Republicans as "anti-science denialists," and one of the [endorsed candidates](#) [7] refers to a GOP politician as "science's public enemy number one" -- a perfectly noble term, but one that should be reserved for somebody who deserves it, like anti-vaxxer Andrew Wakefield or public health menace Joseph Mercola.

Perplexed, I contacted 314 Action's Executive Director, Joshua Morrow. I asked what criteria must be met in order for a candidate to receive an endorsement. In addition to having a background in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), he or she had to be running a serious campaign and actually trying to get elected. Mr. Morrow added that the candidate also had to be a Democrat.

When I asked if 314 Action would endorse a Republican physicist, he responded, "Find that person, and we'll have that discussion. Find that unicorn."

In other words, he doesn't believe many Republican scientists exist. He's right, if we are to believe the polls. According to [Pew](#) [8], merely 6% of scientists identify as Republican, while a whopping 55% claim to be Democrats. Because of this, Mr. Morrow believes that the only plausible path forward for scientists is through the Democratic Party. Eventually, he says, 314 Action would like to endorse candidates from both parties.

I believe this to be a grave strategic blunder. Science is becoming increasingly politicized, and efforts should be undertaken to depoliticize it. If Republicans believe that scientists are politically opposed to them -- a belief that 314 Action is reinforcing -- then that will undermine any efforts to win over Republicans to scientists' causes. In a country split roughly 50/50, scientists must be able to work with whoever is in power, be it a Republican or a Democrat.

Besides, it is very difficult to believe that an organization dedicated to electing Democrats will all of a sudden pivot some day in the future to electing Republicans and Democrats.

At the end of the interview, Mr. Morrow suggested that I consider running for office myself. I was flattered, but in a city that hates GMOs, vaccines, nuclear power, and modern medicine, I wouldn't be very popular.

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**Links**

[1] <https://www.senate.gov/CRSPubs/b8f6293e-c235-40fd-b895-6474d0f8e809.pdf>

[2] <http://www.denniswpottslaw.com/united-states-attorneys-map/>

[3] <http://www.314action.org/mission-1/>

[4] <http://www.314action.org/board-1/>

[5] <http://www.314action.org/endorsed-candidates/>

[6] <http://www.314action.org/news/>

[7] <http://www.314action.org/joseph-kopser>

[8] <http://www.people-press.org/2009/07/09/section-4-scientists-politics-and-religion/>