

Mr. Joel Clement Responses to Questions for the Record

1. *Last month, President Trump issued an Executive Order, titled "Evaluating and Improving the Utility of Federal Advisory Committees." This order gives federal agencies until September 30, 2019 to terminate at least one third of all of their federal advisory committees.*

- *Can you please explain the role of these federal advisory committees at the Department of the Interior?*

Federal Advisory Committees allow agencies to incorporate a wide range of expertise, scientific and otherwise, into decisions and processes that affect Americans. They also allow for engagement of the public and insure a transparent and fair means for gaining input from a variety of stakeholders, including industry, non-governmental organizations, academia and the public. There are many such committees involved in the work of the Interior Department, from advising National Park Service and BLM management of public lands and resources to providing priorities and agendas for the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.

- *How does this executive order affect scientific integrity at federal agencies?*

By establishing an arbitrary limit on Advisory Committees, the Trump Administration is sending a signal that expertise is not valued, that scientific input is unwelcome, and that the number of Advisory Committees is more important than the management outcomes that they inform. This order reduces transparency and helps to remove scientific expertise from management deliberations, enabling politically-driven decision making for the benefit of special interests such as fossil fuel industries.

- *Based on what we have seen so far in the Trump administration, how do you think agencies will decide which advisory committees to terminate? Do you believe that the process will be conducted with objectivity and transparency?*

This order provides Interior leadership with permission to terminate Advisory Committees on purely political grounds. Committees with a proven record of balancing out the influence of fossil fuel or mining industries will likely be eliminated, as will those that provide unbiased scientific expertise. Based on their performance thus far, the political leadership of the agency is unlikely to proceed in a transparent or objective fashion.

2. *In his opening statement, Ranking Member Rob Bishop referred to the decreasing number of scientific integrity complaints at the Department of the Interior during the Trump administration. Is the number of scientific integrity complaints an adequate measure of a scientific integrity problem in an organization?*

The number of complaints is a highly misleading, and perhaps contradictory, measure of scientific integrity. To register a formal complaint, a career scientist must have a high degree of trust that agency leaders will address the complaint fairly. Such trust would not exist in an administration that is hostile to science unless there is a statutory process for overcoming that hostility. In my experience, and from the feedback I've received from career scientists currently

at Interior, registering a scientific integrity complaint is seen as a risky career move to be avoided. SI complaints will probably be rare during this administration.

3. *In May, this Committee held a hearing to examine the President's budget at the Department of the Interior, at which Secretary Bernhardt testified. During the hearing, Secretary Bernhardt said he's "not losing any sleep over climate change."*

- *As the Director of the Office of Policy Analysis at Interior, you worked with Alaskan Native communities in helping them prepare for and adapt to climate change. Would you agree with Secretary Bernhardt's level of concern about climate change?*

I do not agree. Multiple lines of evidence and a high degree of scientific certainty indicate that the health and safety of Americans, particularly those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, are severely threatened by the impacts of climate change. This means that Alaska Native communities – and the missions of every bureau at the Interior department – are similarly at risk. With his remarks, Secretary Bernhardt has shown that he is either unimaginably ignorant of the weight of scientific evidence or callously indifferent to the risks described above.

- *Do you think the Alaskan Native communities with which you worked would agree with Secretary Bernhardt?*

Frontline Alaska Native communities are struggling to maintain health, safety, and their way of life and, in some cases, prevent their villages from disappearing due to the impacts of a rapidly warming Arctic. The communities at risk in the Arctic would not agree with Secretary Bernhardt's blithe disregard for their health and safety.

- *How do you think Secretary Bernhardt's statement impacts the morale of scientific community at Interior that has dedicated their public service careers to understanding and planning for the impacts of climate change on public lands and on communities like those with which you worked?*

The morale of the career staff at Interior, scientists and non-scientists alike, has plummeted as political appointees disregard their work and intentionally undermine the mission of the agency. Scientists assessing and addressing climate impacts have devoted their lives to this important work. Secretary Bernhardt's statement caused hearts to sink across the career ranks, adding insult to injury. Scientists feel particularly beset because they are witnessing systemic disregard for their work across the agency, and the Administration more generally.

4. *Mr. Clement, please describe other ways that Department of Interior officials have sidelined science from the policy process or otherwise politicized science in ways previously unseen. Are there methods other than scientific integrity policies that would help prevent these kinds of practices?*

One particularly egregious and unprecedented action is forcing the National Academy of Science to cancel and cease important research underway on behalf of Americans at risk. There are now multiple examples of this under President Trump's Interior Department. One canceled study related to the health impacts of mountaintop coal mining to nearby communities – a study

requested by the communities themselves. Former Secretary Zinke canceled that study midstream without explanation. A second study Secretary Zinke canceled related to the health and safety of offshore oil rig workers. Both studies were intended to gather information and produce recommendations that would reduce risk to Americans, but both studies were seen as a threat by fossil fuel interests and therefore targeted by the Trump Administration. Interior has also politicized research at the agency by requiring that all science grants over \$50,000 be reviewed in advance by a political appointee with no science background.

5. *Mr. Clement, why do you think that formal scientific integrity complaints at the Department of Interior are down? Does this demonstrate that the Trump administration is more science-friendly than the Obama administration?*

Interior political appointees claim that scientific integrity complaints are down, and I would expect that to be true. However, they insist that this is an indication of improvements in scientific integrity, which is likely false. It's more likely the opposite is true. Scientists at the agency are not likely to register a scientific integrity complaint in an agency that has suppressed science, marginalized and retaliated against scientists, and demonstrated hostility to the role of science in decision-making. In this environment there is absolutely no incentive to attract attention to yourself or risk your research by complaining. By all accounts, including a survey of federal scientists conducted by the Union of Concerned Scientists, scientific integrity has hit an all-time low under the Trump Administration.

6. *Mr. Clement, in your experience, why would scientists at federal agencies need to speak freely about their work, and, what impact does censoring scientists have on the work of the agency, the work of the scientists, and the public at large?*

American taxpayers are funding this research and have a right to learn about the findings and implications for their health and safety, the economy, and the federal lands estate. In the case of Interior, this research provides some of the best evidence and guidance for managing public lands and waters effectively and acting as a responsible trustee for American Indians and Alaska Natives. Transparency of science and inquiry are fundamental to a democratic society, and evidence of censoring such work on behalf of special interests is a major red flag for democracy.

7. *Mr. Clement, what benefit do Landscape Conservation Cooperatives provide for the public, and how are LCCs being undermined?*

LCCs were established to provide non-partisan, stakeholder-informed research and management guidance in the face of environmental change. When fully operational, they covered the entire US, and each LCC was guided by a steering committee comprised of state, local, and federal government officials, tribal members, non-profit organizations, and local business and economic interests. Such multi-stakeholder bodies are difficult and time-consuming to set up but once operational provide very robust tools and information tailored to the needs and priorities of local users – and this was certainly true of the LCCs, which were deeply appreciated by local communities and stakeholders. The Trump Administration has undermined the LCCs by defunding them (despite continued appropriations from Congress to keep them going) and shutting down the steering committees that provide them with their work plans. Because of the strong

local interest in the products of the LCCs, a few have continued to limp along with support from local and state officials, but for the most part the program has been shut down despite ongoing interest from Congress and local officials to keep it going.

8. *Dr. Rosenberg and Mr. Clement, why are strong scientific integrity policies needed to protect the federal workforce from stagnation and attrition?*

The federal science enterprise is driven by smart, devoted career scientists who came to public service to make a difference. Without assurances that they will be able to publish, present their findings, and collaborate with colleagues to advance their field, the careers of these scientists would suffer, their research would falter, and they would see no upside to public service. Scientific integrity policies are necessary to keep these committed public servants on board and attract the best and brightest to federal service.

- *What are the impacts to the country of a federal workforce that lacks scientists to do research?*

Without scientists and experts to inform policy and management, the information necessary to guide policy will come from special interests, such as fossil fuel industries or chemical manufacturers with the resources to influence the agencies. This is made easier when the political appointees responsible for policy and management are hired directly from those industries. This is a major red flag for a functioning democracy.