November 24, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith,

As representatives of the major U.S. science organizations and the hundreds of thousands of scientists and engineers who make up our collective membership, we are writing to express our grave concern regarding the committee's inquiry into a scientific paper prepared by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) researchers.

NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) manages one of the world's most significant archives of oceanic, atmospheric, and geophysical data. Businesses, governments, and academics rely heavily on NCEI data to make informed decisions to help grow the economy and protect public safety and the environment.

The integrity of federal scientists' research published in the journal *Science* is being questioned despite a lack of public evidence of scientific misconduct. The progress and integrity of science depend on transparency about the details of scientific methodology and the ability to follow the pursuit of scientific knowledge. The data and methodology of the paper in question have been publicly shared and discussed directly with the committee staff. While we recognize the oversight responsibility of Congress with respect to the work of government scientists, the committee has continued to suggest that the updates that NOAA scientists made to its dataset constitute scientific misconduct.

Science is a self-correcting process and part of the purpose of placing research into the scholarly record is so other scientists can attempt to replicate, confirm, or refute it. This paper is subject to these same norms. In fact, over the past year there have been other peer-reviewed research papers published by university scientists and derived from other independent data sources that have also analyzed the climate hiatus. This is the way in which science advances.

Scientists and policymakers may disagree over the implications of scientific conclusions on climate change and other policy-relevant topics. Disagreements about the interpretation of data, the methodology, and findings are part of daily scientific discourse. Scientists should not be subjected to fraud investigations or harassment simply for providing scientific results that some may see as politically controversial. Science cannot thrive when policymakers—regardless of party affiliation— use policy disagreements as a pretext to attack scientific conclusions without public evidence.

These broad inquiries threaten to inhibit the free exchange of ideas across scientific disciplines not only for NOAA, but for other government experts and the academic and industry scientists with whom they collaborate.

We are concerned that establishing a practice of inquests directed at federal scientists whose findings may bear on policy in ways that some find unpalatable could well have a chilling effect on the willingness of government scientists to conduct research that intersects with policy-relevant scientific questions. The repercussions of the committee's actions could go well beyond climate science, setting a precedent to question other topics such as genetically modified organisms and vaccines that have controversial regulatory and policy implications.

As we stated previously, we recognize the oversight responsibility of Congress, however, the inquiry should not be used as a tool to inhibit the ability of federal scientists to fulfill their agencies' science missions and of agencies to attract world-class scientific talent. We encourage the committee to utilize other avenues, such as the National Academies, for assessing the science and distilling technical matters to assist policymakers.

Sincerely,

American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Chemical Society
American Geophysical Union
American Meteorological Society
American Statistical Association
Ecological Society of America
Geological Society of America

cc: Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson