



AMERICAN METEOROLOGICAL SOCIETY

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3 March 2016

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

Dear Chairman Smith:

In light of your 22 February 2016 letter to NOAA Administrator Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, the American Meteorological Society (AMS) feels compelled to follow up on our letter of 4 November 2015 (attached). Concerns expressed by AMS in the 4 November letter still stand and are amplified by the extreme broadening of the scope of the e-mail search called for in your 22 February letter. Including all scientists within NOAA's National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service in that search significantly increases the "chilling effect" on science we warned of in our letter.

Again, "we encourage you and the Committee to help promote scientific advancement and to welcome the self-correcting nature of the peer-review process within the international scientific community. That is best accomplished by applauding the open access to data and methodologies that NOAA consistently achieves and supporting the vetting of NOAA research through the peer-reviewed literature."

Sincerely,

Dr. Keith L. Seitter
AMS Executive Director

Attachment: 4 November 2015 Letter



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4 November 2015

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

Dear Chairman Smith:

The American Meteorological Society (AMS) has a long history of supporting free and open access to the data and methodologies used to conduct scientific research. Indeed, reporting on research results fully and transparently through the peer-reviewed literature and providing the capability for other scientists to replicate that research to either confirm or refute those findings is a fundamental foundation of the scientific process. The AMS is concerned, however, with your recent subpoena of NOAA seeking a wide range of internal documents and correspondence related to a specific set of climate research results that have been published in the peer-reviewed literature. Singling out specific research studies, and implicitly questioning the integrity of the researchers conducting those studies, can be viewed as a form of intimidation that could deter scientists from freely carrying out research on important national challenges. As expressed in the AMS Statement on Freedom of Scientific Expression¹:

The ability of scientists to present their findings to the scientific community, policy makers, the media, and the public without censorship, intimidation, or political interference is imperative.

NOAA has stated, unambiguously, that all data and methodologies used for this research are freely available. The demand for internal communications associated with their research places a burden on NOAA scientists, imposes a chilling effect on future communication among scientists, and potentially disrupts NOAA's critical efforts to protect life and property. NOAA and other Federal agencies employ world-class scientists who seek knowledge and understanding with commitment and dedication. *The advancement of science depends on investigators having the freedom to carry out research objectively and without the fear of threats or intimidation whether or not their results are expedient or popular.*

The challenge arises most sharply when the science reported in high-quality journals is directly applicable to current and ongoing social, economic, and political issues. Quoting again from the same AMS Statement:

These principles matter most — and at the same time are most vulnerable to violation — precisely when science has its greatest bearing on society. Earth sciences and their applications have growing implications for public health and safety, economic development, protection of the environment and ecosystems, and national security. Thus, scientists, policy makers, and their supporting institutions share a special responsibility at this time for guarding and promoting the freedom of responsible scientific expression.

We encourage you and the Committee to help promote scientific advancement and to welcome the self-correcting nature of the peer-review process within the international scientific community. That is best accomplished by applauding the open access to data and methodologies that NOAA consistently achieves and supporting the vetting of NOAA research through the peer-reviewed literature.

Sincerely,

Dr. Keith L. Seitter
AMS Executive Director

¹ <https://www2.ametsoc.org/ams/index.cfm/about-ams/ams-statements/statements-of-the-ams-in-force/freedom-of-scientific-expression/>