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CREATOR:Khary I. Cauthen ( CN=Khary I. Cauthen/OU=CEQ/O=EOP [ CEQ ] )

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June 23, 2003 Monday Home Edition

SECTION: Editorial; Pg. 10A

LENGTH: 640 words

HEADLINE: OUR OPINIONS: Give EPA heat for hiding facts on global warming

SOURCE: AJC

BODY:

There is a dangerous pattern emerging from the Bush administration: If the facts don't suit President Bush's policies, distort them.

Public attention has already been focused on charges that Bush and his aides hyped intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Two congressional committees are investigating.

Now comes news that an important Environmental Protection Agency report leaves out critical scientific facts on global warming --- even facts confirmed by a special study requested by the president himself last year. That study substantiated the Earth's alarming temperature increase over the last decade and its major cause, increased carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels. The biggest sources are automobiles and coal-fired utilities.

The White House Council on Environmental Quality and Bush budget officials changed the global warming section of a comprehensive report on the nation's environmental challenges to be issued by the EPA next week. The report was the final contribution of EPA chief Christie Whitman, who is stepping down as agency administrator.

Whitman, who came to her post with a good record on environmental issues, continued her habit of turning the other cheek whenever the White House slaps down science in favor of its corporate oil friends. She said she is "comfortable" with the report.

Ironically, Whitman suffered her first embarrassment on the global warming issue shortly after she was sworn in, when she assured the international community that the United States was serious about its commitment to carbon dioxide reductions, only to have Bush rescind the U.S. signature to the global warming treaty. It is sad that in her last week at the agency, the departing EPA chief must suffer a similar embarrassment.

Among the deletions were conclusions about the human contribution to global warming from the 2001 National Research Council report the White House commissioned (after rejecting similar conclusions by a United Nations panel of scientists), one that Bush previously endorsed in several speeches. White House officials also deleted a reference to a 1999 study by a respected panel of scientists showing that global temperatures had gone up sharply in the last decade compared with levels over the past 1,000 years. Instead, Bush officials added a reference to a new study, partly financed by the American Petroleum Institute, questioning that conclusion.

Deleted from the report, for example, is even the simple statement upon

which scientists agree: "Climate change has global consequences for human health and the environment." That statement is replaced with one meant to obfuscate and confuse; it cites the complexities of the issue and the need to resolve uncertainties. The White House changes were so extensive, according to an April 29 EPA staff memo given to the media by a former EPA official, that the report's climate section "no longer accurately represents scientific consensus on climate change."

The president's refusal to face the facts on global warming cannot be construed as anything other than blatant pandering to his friends in Big Oil. They have spent years minimizing scientific facts and refusing to concede the need for conservation and alternative energy sources that could save our children from serious economic and environmental consequences.

Sen. Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.), the ranking minority member on the Senate Environment and Public Works committee, along with several Democratic committee members, has asked the White House for the original drafts of the climate change section. Members on both sides of the aisle are obligated to find out to what extent the American people are being misled on a matter at least as important to the future security of the nation as Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

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The Atlanta Journal and Constitution  
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SECTION: Editorial; Pg. 11A  
LENGTH: 469 words

HEADLINE: EQUAL TIME: Nature, not man, to blame for warmer climate  
BYLINE: ROBERT GRECO  
SOURCE: For the Journal-Constitution  
BODY:

It is true that the American Petroleum Institute helped sponsor the groundbreaking research referred to in The New York Times story on global warming. But API's role was relatively small. Most of the funding for the research came from several federal agencies, including NASA, the U.S. Air Force and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.  
But focusing on the funding misses the point. Much more important is the critical substance of the research itself, which was done by two eminent scientists, Willie Soon and Sallie Baliunas of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, Mass.  
Their analysis suggests that the world was as warm or warmer between 800 A.D. and 1300 A.D. as in the late 20th century. If that's true --- and it appears to be --- nature was more important than cars or coal-fired utilities in causing higher temperatures in that era.  
Their work found that the warming experienced in the late 20th century was not unusual. They analyzed 240 separate studies of tree rings, ice cores, stalactites, coral, glaciers and other sources, including cultural and documentary records going back over 1,000 years.  
Their conclusions are important because for a decade, the debate surrounding global climate change has assumed that significant increases in temperature occurred only during the final decades of the 20th century when fossil fuels became the main source of energy for mankind.  
That has been the conclusion of the United Nations' scientific arm, the International Panel on Climate Change, which says that human activity is largely to blame for producing the greenhouse gases that drive temperatures up.  
Until now, the United Nations' work has set the agenda for much of the

debate about climate change. Its report constructed a mathematical temperature model based on a single tree-ring study of data collected mostly from Northern Hemisphere locations. Baliunas and Soon found that warming during the 20th century was neither unique nor as extreme as during those earlier simpler times when world population was less than one-tenth of what it is today, and the Industrial Revolution was yet to come.

In other words, emissions caused by people were minimal. So, if climate was changing naturally and significantly hundreds of years ago, how do we know that forces of nature are not the main causes of climate change today?

And how do we distinguish natural climate change from that possibly caused by emissions from the internal combustion engine, or the burning of coal to generate electricity?

Intelligent discussion of the science surrounding climate change will help all of us to set the right public policies on this highly complex issue. Robert Greco is director of global climate programs for the American Petroleum Institute.

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