

Summary

The Restore Scientific Integrity to Federal Research and Policymaking Act

On February 16, 2004, Rep. Henry A. Waxman, the ranking member of the House Government Reform Committee, and Rep. Bart Gordon, the ranking member of the House Science Committee, introduced the “Restore Scientific Integrity to Federal Research and Policymaking Act” (H.R. 839). The bill responds to growing concerns about politicization of science in the executive branch.

PROHIBITING INTERFERENCE WITH SCIENCE

The legislation ensures that federal scientists can carry out their responsibilities free from political interference. Specifically, it prohibits:

- Obstructing federally funded scientific research;
- Censoring findings of federally funded scientific research; and
- Disseminating scientific information known to be false or misleading

EXPERT SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The bill protects the integrity and independence of federal scientific advisory committees by prohibiting appointments based on political litmus tests. It also strengthens the protections against conflict of interests on advisory committees.

WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS

The Act expands whistleblower protections to federal employees who disclose allegations of political interference with science. Employees who report such incidents at their agencies will no longer have to fear retaliation.

INDEPENDENT PEER REVIEW

The bill provides that federal science-based agencies — not the Office of Management and Budget in the White House — should establish the applicable standards for peer review of agency science.

ANNUAL REPORTS

The bill directs the White House Science Advisor to prepare annual reports on scientific integrity in the federal agencies and to inform Congress of changes in federal science policy.