

The Future of the
ENVIRONMENT


The Battle

Climate scientists routinely face death threats, hate mail, nuisance lawsuits and political attacks. How much worse can it get?

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There's no police tape across Michael Mann's office doorway this morning. "Always a good start," he says, juggling a cup of coffee as he slides his key into the lock.

Mann, a paleoclimatologist, wears a sport coat over a turtleneck. As he takes a seat at his desk, a narrow sunbeam angles through the window, spotlighting a jumble of books, journals and correspondence. Behind him, a framed picture of his six-year-old daughter rests near a certificate for the Nobel Peace Prize he shared in 2007. Propped into a corner is a hockey stick, a post-lecture gift from Middlebury College, which Mann jokingly says he keeps "for self-defense."

Mann directs Penn State University's Earth System Science Center. Several months ago, he arrived at his office with an armload of mail. Sitting at his desk, he tore open a hand-addressed envelope and began to pull out a letter. He watched as a small mass of white powder cascaded out of the folds and onto his fingers. Mann jerked backward, letting the letter drop and holding his breath as a tiny plume of particles wafted up, sparkling in the sunlight. He rose quickly and left the office, pulling the door shut behind him. "I went down to the restroom and washed my hands," he says. "Then I called the police."

For someone describing an anthrax scare, Mann is surprisingly nonchalant. "I guess," he says, "it's so much a part of my life that I don't even realize how weird it is."

"Weird" is perhaps the mildest way to describe the growing number of threats and acts of intimidation that climate scientists face. A climate modeler at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory answered a late-night knock to find a dead rat on his doorstep and a yellow Hummer speeding away. An MIT hurricane researcher found his inbox flooded daily for two weeks last January with hate mail and threats directed at him

and his wife. And in Australia last year, officials relocated several climatologists to a secure facility after climate-change skeptics unleashed a barrage of vandalism, noose brandishing and threats of sexual attacks on the scientists' children.

Those crude acts of harassment often come alongside more-sophisticated legal and political attacks. Organizations routinely file nuisance lawsuits and onerous Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to disrupt the work of climate scientists. In 2005, before dragging Mann and other climate researchers into congressional hearings, Texas congressman Joe Barton ordered the scientists to submit voluminous details of working procedures, computer programs and past funding—essentially demanding that they reproduce and defend their entire life's work. In a move that hearkened back to darker times, Oklahoma senator James Inhofe, the ranking member of the Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee, released a report in 2010 that named 17 prominent climate scientists, including Mann, who, he argued, may have engaged in "potentially criminal behavior." Inhofe outlined three laws and four regulations that he said the scientists may have violated, including the Federal False Statements Act—which, the report noted, could be punishable with imprisonment of up to five years.

It's late February when I visit Mann in his office, almost two years after Inhofe issued his "list of 17." Though it's still winter in central Pennsylvania, the temperature outside hangs in the upper 60s, crocus stems poke up from flower beds, and shopkeepers have thrown open their doors along College Avenue. Mann is home for three days between conferences in Milwaukee and Hawaii and West Coast stops on a promotional tour for his new book, *The Hockey Stick and the Climate Wars*.

In the late 1990s, Mann developed a graph that demonstrated a recent and dramatic uptick in global mean surface temperatures. The hockey-stick-shaped curve has become emblematic to both sides of the climate debate. To the vast majority of climate scientists, it represents evidence, corroborated by decades of peer-reviewed research, of global warming. To climate-change skeptics, the hockey stick is the most grievous of many illusions fabricated by thousands of conspiring scientists to support an iniquitous political agenda.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) included Mann's graph in its Third Assessment Report in 2001. Al Gore and Davis Guggenheim then included it in their 2006 climate-change documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. The film galvanized both the pro- and contra-climate-science camps, propelling the issue of human-caused global warming into the culture wars—and Mann along with it. "Since then, my life has been crazy," he says. "People have stolen my e-mails and bought billboards and newspaper ads to denounce me; they've staged bogus grassroots protests; they've threatened my family. I've been through eight investigations by everyone from the National Science Foundation to the British House of Commons. Every time, they find no evidence of fraud or misuse of information. Every time, they conclude that my methods are sound, my data replicable. And every time I'm exonerated, another investigation pops up."

Mann has been called a "compulsive liar, a con man and an extraordinary psychological case." Some critics accuse him of masterminding a cabal of scientists that aims to establish a new



world order. Still others compare him to Hitler, Stalin and Satan.

At the time of our meeting, Mann was juggling several FOIA requests and two lawsuits—one of which would be resolved the following week, when the Virginia Supreme Court rejected the state attorney general's demand that the University of Virginia (Mann's former employer) turn over the researcher's e-mails and other documents. The university spent nearly \$600,000 to argue that releasing personal correspondence would chill academic research. "Yes, there's been a toll on me and my family," Mann says. "But it's bigger than that. Look what it's doing to science, when others see this and see what happens if they speak up about their research. These efforts to discredit science are well-organized. It's not just a bunch of crazy people."

* * *

"There's really only about 25 of us doing this," Steve Milloy says, shortly after sitting down at Morton's, a Washington, D.C., steakhouse favored by lawyers and lobbyists. "A core group of skeptics. It's a ragtag bunch, very Continental Army." Milloy, a Fox News commentator and former tobacco-industry advocate, runs a website called *JunkScience.com* that is an outlet for attacks on those he calls "global-warming alarmists." Many of those who question mainstream climate science resent being called deniers; they say it unfairly equates them with Holocaust deniers. They prefer doubters, skeptics or realists. "Me, I just stick with denial," Milloy says. "I'm happy to be a denier."

Milloy is dressed in a striped pink button-down shirt and khaki pants, classic Potomac prep. He moved into climate denial in the 1990s as funding from the tobacco lobby began to dry up. At the time, conservative and libertarian think tanks were just starting to take aim at climate science. Milloy, who has received funding from entities controlled by oil billionaires Charles and David Koch, helps them get their message to the masses.

Milloy and other aggressive deniers practice a form of asymmetric warfare that is decentralized and largely immune to reasoned response. They launch what Aaron Huertas, a press secretary at the Union of Concerned Scientists, calls "information missiles," anti-climate-change memes that get passed around on listservs, amplified in the blogosphere, and picked up by radio talk-show hosts or politicians. "Even if they don't have much money, they are operating in a structure that allows them to punch above their weight," Huertas says.

Scientists who speak up quickly become targets. Both Milloy

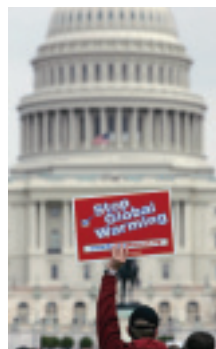
and his counterpart Marc Morano, who runs the site *ClimateDepot.com* and once declared that climate scientists "deserve to be publicly flogged," occasionally publish the e-mail addresses of climate researchers, a stunt that can result in scientists receiving a flood of vitriolic messages. A few weeks before our meeting, Milloy had offered a \$500 bounty for a video of anyone who would heckle Mann with "an alarmism-debunking" question during the California leg of his book tour. The hecklers never materialized but, as with the white powder in Mann's letter (which the FBI determined to be cornstarch), the threat made an impact.

Mann calls Milloy "a valueless, all-purpose denier for notorious industries who need a hired gun." But Milloy, like others in the movement, says that he's fighting an existential war with forces that would, without his intervention, steal the American way of life. "This whole green thing, the whole environmental scare industry, is really just an ingenious plan to exert government control over everything we do," Milloy says. "I have yet to see an environmental scare that is remotely true when it comes to human health. Secondhand smoke, air quality, ozone depletion, pesticides, superfund sites—you name it."

* * *

The evidence to support the theory of anthropogenic, or human-caused, climate change has been mounting since the mid-1950s, when atmospheric models predicted that growing levels of CO₂ in the atmosphere would add to the natural "greenhouse effect" and lead to warming. The data was crude at first, and opinions vacillated (skeptics like to recall a 1974 *Time* cover story that predicted an impending ice age). But by the mid-1990s, thousands of lines of independent inquiry supported the conclusion summarized in the 1995 IPCC report: "The balance of evidence suggests a discernible human influence on global climate."

Since then, the case for anthropogenic climate change has only strengthened; 98 percent of actively publishing climate scientists now say that it is undeniable. But several finer points remain unsettled. For instance, researchers still don't completely understand the role of aerosols in the atmosphere, the variable effects of clouds at different heights, and the influence of feedback mechanisms such as the changing reflectivity of the Earth's surface and the release of gases from permafrost or deep seabeds. Climate-change skeptics have been keen to capitalize on those gaps in knowledge. "They play up smaller debates," says Francesca Grifo at the Union of Concerned Scientists,



FORCES OF NATURE

From left: Michael Mann, a paleoclimatologist, has been the subject of lawsuits, congressional investigations and an anthrax scare; a protester at a pro-climate-science rally in 2007; Richard Muller, a physicist, was one of the few prominent scientists skeptical of global warming. He reversed his position last year.

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“and divert the dialogue by attacking particular aspects. They represent climate science as a house of cards, where you pull out one and it all falls apart.”

In 1998, following the negotiation of the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, the American Petroleum Institute convened a task force to spend more than \$5.9 million to discredit climate science and quash growing public support of curbing emissions. The group borrowed many of the methods and people, including Milloy, that had been used to mislead Congress and the public about the connection between smoking and cancer and heart disease. In a leaked memo titled the “Global Climate Science Communications Plan,” the task force laid out a strategy to “build a case against precipitous action on climate change based on the scientific uncertainty.” The memo details a plan to recruit, train and pay willing scientists to sow doubt about climate science among the media and the public. “Victory will be achieved,” the memo states, when “recognition of uncertainties becomes part of the ‘conventional wisdom’ ” and when “those promoting the Kyoto treaty on the basis of the extant science appear to be out of touch with reality.”

In March 2001, George W. Bush’s administration declared that climate science was “too uncertain” to justify action (such as ratifying the Kyoto treaty) that might put the brakes on economic growth. That refrain would be echoed again and again, weakening or derailing successive international agreements and domestic policy. How had a small band of non-scientists managed to so quickly and thoroughly persuade the nation’s leaders to reject an ever more coherent and definitive body of scientific evidence?

“Multiple feet of sea level rising in the next few decades, that’s just fantasy,” says Myron Ebell, the director of energy and global-warming policy at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a free-market think tank. Ebell is in a taxi heading down K Street, Washington’s lobbyist’s row, talking to a reporter from the *Naples Daily News* in Florida. The journalist called to get his perspective on a new scientific study that warns of more frequent flooding along U.S. coastlines as higher temperatures accelerate rising sea levels. “The evidence is inconclusive,” Ebell says. “The [Antarctic] ice sheet is not shrinking but may in fact be expanding. The reality from the experts is . . .”

Ebell does not claim to be a scientist. His background is in economics, and like Milloy, he was a member of the American Petroleum Institute task force in 1998. Yet his lack of scientific credentials has not deterred a stream of journalists from requesting his opinion of the newly released study. “Happens every time I get quoted in the *New York Times*,” he says. Ebell provides two things most scientists can’t: a skeptical view of climate science and clear, compelling sound bites ready for the evening news or the morning paper. For a deadline-pressured journalist covering “both sides” of a complex issue, Ebell might seem an ideal source. Yet by including unscientific opinions alongside scientific ones, that same journalist creates an illusion of equivalence that can tilt public opinion.

“It’s that false balance thing,” Mann says. “You’re a reporter and you understand there’s an overwhelming consensus that evidence supports a particular hypothesis—let’s say, the Earth is an oblate spheroid. But you’ve got to get a comment from a holdout



COLLATERAL DAMAGE

Katharine Hayhoe, an atmospheric scientist, wrote a chapter on climate change for Newt Gingrich’s forthcoming book, only to have it pulled after the politician hit the campaign trail.

at the Flat Earth Society. People see the story and think there’s a serious scientific debate about the shape of the Earth.”

On the taxi’s radio, a weatherman forecasts that tomorrow will be Washington’s hottest March 15 in recorded history. Ebell glances out the window at the cherry trees, in full bloom two weeks earlier than usual, as he thumbs down to his next call. “This one’s a producer at *PBS NewsHour*,” he says. “They’re interviewing one of those sea-level guys and they want to know how they should approach asking him a negative question.”

Ebell connects with the producer: “What they’re saying is, we’ve got to throw huge, scarce resources into what is essentially a nonproblem, that would be the point I’d make to him. The modelers will never admit that their models have no forecasting ability. They’re just saying that this could happen.” Then he winds up for his kicker. “Well, I’m sorry, a lot of things *could* happen. The Earth *could* be hit by an asteroid tomorrow.”

For the many scientists who consider themselves both political conservatives and supporters of the consensus position on anthropogenic climate change, ideology and party affiliation provide little shelter from attacks and harassment. Katharine Hayhoe is an atmospheric scientist at Texas Tech University, a political conservative and an evangelical Christian. In 2007,

FROM TOP: COURTESY HEARTLAND INSTITUTE; AP PHOTO/NELLIE DONEVA



FACE OF DENIAL

The Heartland Institute launched an anti-climate-science ad campaign in Chicago in May. The ad was pulled within a day, but other versions would have shown Charles Manson and Osama bin Laden.



“When I get an e-mail that mentions my child and a guillotine, I want to pull a blanket over my head.”

Terry Maple, the co-author of Newt Gingrich’s forthcoming book on environmental entrepreneurship, asked her to write a chapter reviewing the scientific facts surrounding climate change. For most of his political career, Gingrich championed the virtues of science, but last year, while campaigning in the Republican presidential primaries, he dropped Hayhoe’s chapter after Rush Limbaugh discovered her contribution and ridiculed her as a “climate babe.”

“Nice to hear that Gingrich is tossing my climate chapter in the trash,” Hayhoe tweeted on hearing the news. “100+ unpaid hours I could’ve spent playing w[ith] my baby . . .” The day after Hayhoe’s tweet, the American Tradition Institute (ATI), a conservative think tank, announced that it had filed a FOIA request with Texas Tech University “relating to collaboration on a book, using public time and resources.” The ATI’s paperwork referred to Hayhoe as a “climate activist.”

“I can delete the death threats and the e-mail I got calling me a ‘Nazi bitch whore climatebecile,’” Hayhoe says, “but responding to nuisance lawsuits and investigations takes up enormous amounts of time that could be better spent teaching, mentoring, researching, doing my job.”

David Schnare heads the Environmental Law Center at the ATI, which since its inception in 2009 has sued the employers and former employers of a number of climate scientists, including Mann and James Hansen, the outspoken head of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies. The ATI wants the

researchers’ correspondence and research records. “We are not a venal organization,” Schnare says. “Our law center seeks to defend good science and proper governmental behavior and to expose the converse. Citizens have the right to know how government money is spent. Scientists who feel they shouldn’t have to respond to these requests shouldn’t be working in a government institution, because this is the price of entering.”

In 2006, Jeffrey Gleason and Charles Monnett, two government scientists working out of Alaska, published a report that described dead polar bears floating in the Arctic Ocean. The apparently drowned animals raised concerns about the effect of melting ice in the Arctic. As with Mann’s hockey-stick graph, the story of drowned polar bears made its way into *An Inconvenient Truth* and became a point of contention for climate skeptics. In 2010 both scientists came under investigation by the U.S. Office of the Inspector General for what it termed “integrity issues.”

Jeff Ruch, the executive director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, is providing Gleason and Monnett with legal representation. “After more than two years of investigations, there have been no charges, no timelines, no requests for response,” Ruch says. “It’s Kafkaesque. We don’t know what started this and what’s keeping it going. But we do know that for both men, their lives have been hell.” Monnett, Ruch says, has vowed not to publish another scientific paper, and Gleason has left his job in Alaska. Neither scientist responded to our requests for comment.

The story of Monnett and Gleason is exceptional. Few scientists have actually left their field as a result of harassment, says Gavin Schmidt, a climate modeler at NASA Goddard who is currently defending a case brought by the ATI. “But,” he says, “it does dissuade people from speaking out about their work. They see the harassment and intimidation and say, ‘It’s more stress than I need.’”

“When I get an e-mail that mentions my child and a guillotine,” Hayhoe says, “I sometimes want to pull a blanket over my head. The intent of all this is to discourage scientists. As a woman and a mother, I have to say that sometimes it does achieve its goal. There are many times when I wonder if it’s worth it.”

With scientists reluctant to speak out (and drowned out when they do), skeptics have had more room to attack climate-research programs. Last year, Republicans in the House of Representatives made a unanimous decision to overturn the Environmental Protection Agency’s finding that greenhouse-gas pollution threatens public health. Texas representative Ralph Hall, the chairman of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, along with 10 of his Republican colleagues, also called for budget cuts and program terminations that directly targeted climate-science research, efforts to curb emissions, and preparations for climate-change impact at the National Science Foundation, the EPA and the Department of Energy.

Although many of the cuts were undone in the Senate, funding for climate-related programs at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration did not fare as well. After launching an investigation into NOAA’s attempts to reorganize its climate services into a single unit, Hall successfully pushed through legislation to cut the agency’s climate-research

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funding by 20 percent, forcing it to cancel research grants.

"Now government agencies and researchers are doing anything to keep the word 'climate' out of their budgets and proposals," says Rick Piltz, a former senior associate in the U.S. Climate Change Science Program Office (in 2009, it was renamed the U.S. Global Change Research Program). "And this at a time when all agencies need to be thinking about how the nation will be affected by climate change and factor it into their planning."

Worldwide, proposals for carbon taxes, cap-and-trade programs and meaningful CO₂ reductions have foundered on a lack of political consensus. In December, Canada became the first country to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol, citing the cost of compliance. The U.N.'s 2009 climate conference in Copenhagen yielded little actionable policy, and this June's Earth Summit +20 in Brazil has been newsworthy mostly for the low expectations surrounding it.

In the U.S., local climate skeptics have been advancing their agendas. In Virginia, Tea Party-inspired residents recently derailed municipal preparations for sea-level rise around Hampton Roads, the body of water that borders Norfolk-Virginia Beach. They disrupted planning meetings and disputed as a plot NOAA's findings that the area faces the second-highest risk from sea-level rise of any region of its size in the U.S. In April, Tennessee lawmakers passed a measure that allows teachers to question accepted theories on evolution and climate change in the classroom. Science advocates were also stunned by a recently disclosed initiative to design a school curriculum that questions climate science. Science educators say they're increasingly worried that climate could become the same kind of flash point as evolution. The question science advocates ask now is, how do they turn the conversation back to the science?

Scientists are starting to fight back. Schmidt co-founded *RealClimate.org*, a forum for climate scientists to quickly respond to developing stories and "provide the context sometimes missing in mainstream commentary." Several other scientists launched the Climate Science Legal Defense Fund last year to help scientists and institutions respond to nuisance lawsuits. "We have a responsibility to the scientific community to not allow those looking to discredit us to be successful," Mann says. "What they're going to see is that they've awakened a sleeping bear. We will counterpunch."

But playing the activist can be a slippery slope. In February, climate analyst and MacArthur "genius" grant recipient Peter Gleick admitted using a false identity to obtain and distribute files that provided a detailed picture of the finances and plans of the Heartland Institute, an anti-regulatory think tank that calls climate research "junk science." The incident was a bizarre mirror of the 2009 "Climate Gate" scandal, in which hackers gained access to the e-mails of prominent climate scientists and distributed excerpts out of context. Although eight independent investigations later found that the scientists did nothing unethical, Climate Gate has become a rallying point for climate-change skeptics. Gleick was almost certainly aiming to incite a similar reaction among climate-science advocates. Instead many in the scientific community quickly condemned his tactics. Schmidt deemed them "completely irresponsible" and predicted that



VOICES OF DOUBT
Myron Ebell educates the media about the "uncertainties" surrounding climate science. The brothers Charles and David Koch support a number of anti-climate-science programs.



"public discussion on this issue will be much the poorer for this."

Seated at a conference table in Heartland's new downtown Chicago headquarters, Joe Bast, the organization's president, is a bit more forceful. "Peter Gleick was so desperate and delusional that he was willing to break the law repeatedly and lie and deceive people. Once again, the most alarmist voices in the debate have been found to be behaving very badly." Bast is compact and intense, with a well-trimmed beard and a raspy voice "from years of smoking," he tells me. He says the documents, one of which appears to have been forged, don't show a smoking gun. "Our enemies are calling it 'Denial Gate,' " he says, leaning forward over the table. "We're calling it 'Fake Gate.' Try to find anything in there that suggests we are anything other than sincere and above the table, and doing exactly what we say we're doing."

Probably the most surprising revelation is that Heartland's climate work is funded primarily by one individual, referred to in the institute's fundraising plan as the Anonymous Donor, who has contributed \$12.7 million over the past five years. The organization's climate programs include the school curriculum questioning widely accepted climate science and its annual International Conference on Climate Change, an event many scientists lampoon as "Denialpalooza." Despite those programs, Bast says Heartland does not reject all of mainstream climate science. "Virtually everybody agrees," he tells me, that "there has been warming in the second half of the 20th century [and] that there is probably a human role in that warming, that carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas, and that the increase in atmospheric concentrations can be attributed to human activity." The organization, he says, argues primarily for "cost-effective solutions" to climate change. As our meeting is wrapping up, Bast says genuinely, "Don't call us deniers. Skeptics is fine. Moderates, realists. But not deniers."



“We cannot allow those looking to discredit scientists to be successful. They’ve awakened a sleeping bear. We will counterpunch.”

But a few weeks later, Heartland would launch a new advertising campaign. As drivers crawled along Chicago’s busy Eisenhower Expressway, they were confronted with a large billboard that compared believers in global warming with Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber. The text on the billboard read, “I still believe in global warming. Do you?” The advertisement was meant to be the first in a series. Others would liken climate-science advocates to mass murderers, including Charles Manson and Osama bin Laden. Bast did not respond for comment following the launch of the campaign, but Heartland issued a press release: “The people who believe in man-made global warming are mostly on the radical fringe of society. This is why the most prominent advocates of global warming aren’t scientists. They are murderers, tyrants, and madmen.”

“There are powerful voices of unreason,” says Ben Santer, who led the 1995 IPCC team, “but every year, the science becomes stronger and the data are telling an ever more consistent story.” As with tobacco, the more consistent the scientific story, the more difficult it will become for skeptics to reject anthropogenic climate change. That point was driven home after the Charles

Koch Foundation donated \$150,000 toward a study by Richard Muller, a physicist at the University of California at Berkeley who was, at the time, a darling of the climate-skeptic community. Muller spent two years investigating claims by global-warming deniers that temperature rises verified by multiple studies were skewed because of flawed analysis, unreliable weather stations and the effect of urban heat islands. Muller and his research team (which included Saul Perlmutter, the joint winner of the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics) compiled 1.6 billion readings at 39,000 sites and examined other historical data.

Muller’s conclusion was most likely not what the Koch brothers had in mind. Last October, his team announced that the global mean temperature on land had increased by 1.6 degrees since 1950, a result that matched the numbers accepted by the mainstream climate-science community. “The skeptics raised valid points, and everybody should have been a skeptic two years ago,” Muller told me. “Now we have confidence that the temperature rises previously reported had been done without bias. Global warming is real.”

Some conservative think tanks have since begun to soften their positions. Jeff Kueter, the current president of the George C. Marshall Institute, which has been advocating against mainstream climate science since the 1980s, told me in his office in Virginia last month that “climate change is not a hoax” and that “human activities undoubtedly have an impact on climate change.”

Those who fund the denial machine are likewise reconsidering their positions. Exxon has scaled back its annual anti-climate-science funding by 78 percent, or \$2.7 million, since 2006. Other publicly traded oil companies have followed suit. In response to Heartland’s billboard campaign, some of its biggest donors, including State Farm Insurance, the beverage giant Diageo, and the insurance and financial-services company USAA, announced that they were pulling their funding. In a message on Heartland’s website, Bast wrote, “We do not apologize for running the ad, and we will continue to experiment with ways to communicate the ‘realist’ message on the climate.” The billboard, however, was gone a day after it was put up.

Public opinion in the U.S. about anthropogenic climate change is also changing. This spring, four major universities released polls showing that a clear majority of American citizens now say that the world is warming and that the country should take action. Jon Krosnick, a professor of communications at Stanford University, conducted one of the polls. He found that 83 percent of Americans say they believe that the Earth has been warming. One significant factor, he suggests, is that Americans can finally see and feel climate change happening.

“You no longer have to believe a scientist who is telling you that something is happening that you can’t see,” Krosnick says. “Now people are saying, ‘I can tell my plants are flowering much earlier, and I’m wearing shorts and T-shirts to the fall fair, when I used to wear jackets.’” Among those he polled, 71 percent support the U.S. taking action to reduce emissions regardless of whether other countries do so. “If the public does in fact support these views,” Krosnick asks, “why are politicians not taking action?”

On a summery afternoon in mid-March, Senator Inhofe dashes onto the stage at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think

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tank in Washington, D.C., to introduce his new book, *The Greatest Hoax: How the Global Warming Conspiracy Threatens Your Future*. “Why?” he asks the crowd. “Why, when the United Nations IPCC is totally refuted, when Al Gore is totally discredited, when man-made global warming is totally debunked, when passing a global-warming cap-and-trade bill is totally shot down, why is this book necessary?” He veers off-topic for several minutes to rail against “liberal Republicans” and “an unelected bureaucrat at the EPA.” Then, suddenly, he looks around and asks, “Am I going to be introduced?”

I scan the room. Myron Ebell of the Competitive Enterprise Institute and Marc Morano, the *ClimateDepot.com* blogger and former Inhofe aide who is widely considered to have ghostwritten most of his book, are there. So are about 150 others, a mostly older crowd that’s captivated by Inhofe’s folksy outrage and his PowerPoint presentation, which begins with his famous 2003 quote: “With all the hysteria, all the fear, all the phony science, could it be that man-made global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people? It sure sounds like it is.”

It’s an entertaining ride. Inhofe doesn’t mention Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s comment earlier that week referring to him as “Big Oil’s top call girl.” Instead he speaks of the current “war on fossil fuels” and about how the U.N.’s interest in climate is motivated by “power, autonomy and control.” He boasts of how, in 2005, he called science-fiction novelist Michael Crichton to the Senate floor to testify as an “expert witness” on climate change and about how in 2009 he flew to Copenhagen as “a one-man truth squad” to take the wind out of the U.N. Climate Change Conference. He shows a picture of the igloo his children built in front of their Washington, D.C., home in 2010 to mock Al Gore.

Throughout his presentation, Inhofe deftly manages to be simultaneously affable and outraged. “I love everybody,” he tells me after the crowd has departed, adding that he and Gore were “good friends” at one time. “I still am,” he says, “because I love everybody. That’s the difference between me and my adversaries.”

Just as in the rest of the country,

belief in human-caused climate change in Oklahoma has been rising with the thermometer—according to Krosnick, a large majority of Inhofe’s constituents now believe that anthropogenic global warming is real. I ask Inhofe if he’s noticed any climate changes in his home state, such as last summer’s unprecedented heat and severe drought, withering crops, wild fires and dramatically expanded tornado season. “There’s not been any warming,” he snaps. “And there’s actually been a little bit of cooling. It’s all documented. Look at the Dust Bowl. Back then it was a lot hotter. Matter of fact, now they say the hottest time was actually during that time—1934, I guess.”

Actually, last summer’s average temperature of 86.9° was the highest ever recorded in Oklahoma. And last spring’s drought, when hundreds of farmers abandoned livestock they could no longer manage to feed or water, was the worst since 1921.

Many of the scientists I’ve spoken with say that no single act of harassment or intimidation has stung more than Inhofe’s “list of 17,” the call for the congressional investigation of prominent climate scientists. Mann, I tell Inhofe, said it “smacked of modern-day McCarthyism.”

“I’m not the guy that called for investigations, I don’t think,” Inhofe says. He quickly glances at his communications director, Matt Dempsey. “Did I ever call for investigations?” I study Inhofe’s face for a clue as to whether he’s joking—he brags about the episode in his book. It’s clear that he is not. Dempsey nods at his boss. “Okay,” Inhofe says. “Maybe right after Climate Gate, I said they need to be investigated.”

The room is nearly empty when I ask Inhofe, finally, if he could imagine the possibility, however remote, that science could provide any amount or type of evidence that could convince him that human-caused climate change could be real. The senator darts an impatient look at his watch, and his handlers rise. It’s clear that the interview is coming to an end. “When people like you ask that question,” Inhofe says, “I can tell you believe it.”

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