

Trump directs agencies to cut advisory boards by 'at least' one third

BY MIRANDA GREEN AND REBECCA BEITSCH - 06/14/19 06:10 PM EDT

Just In...

Pew: World population expected to virtually stop growing by 2100

NEWS — 5S AGO

Mastercard to let transgender people use chosen name on cards

FINANCE — 3M 5S AGO

The Hill's 12:30 Report

— Presented by MAPRx

— Supreme Court
double jeopardy ruling
could impact Manafort

12:30 REPORT — 14M 25S AGO

The potential downside to Amazon's recent charitable endeavor

OPINION — 16M 58S AGO

Investigation begins into cause of massive blackout in South America

BLOG BRIEFING ROOM

— 18M 37S AGO

BuzzFeed staff plans walkout amid ongoing push to unionize

MEDIA — 20M 34S AGO

Third-party contractors — our weakest cyber link — need to be held accountable

 $\mathsf{OPINION} - 26\mathsf{M}\ 58\mathsf{S}\ \mathsf{AGO}$

Georgia commissioner seeking \$5M in damages after being

11,828 SHARES



TWEET

×



President Trump is directing all agencies to cut their advisory boards by "at least" one third.

The executive order issued Friday evening directs all federal agencies to "evaluate the need" for each of their current advisory committees.

The order gives agencies until Sept. 30 to terminate, at a minimum, one-third of their committees.

Committees that qualify for the chopping block include those that have completed their objective, had their work taken up by other panels or where the subject matter has "become obsolete."

Another defining factor listed includes whether the agency itself has determined that the cost of operating the agency is "excessive in relation to the benefits to the Federal Government."

Critics say the order is another administration attack on experts who provide scientific advice.

"For the past two years they have been shrinking and restricting the role of federal science advisory committees," Gretchen Goldman, the research director with the Center for Science and Democracy at the Union for Concerned Scientists, said in a statement. "Now they're removing the possibility of even making decisions based on robust science advice. It's

punished for calling John Lewis a 'racist pig'

STATE WATCH — 28M 3S AGO

VIEW ALL

Related News





Hannity mocks NBC for making Maddow a...



If You Can Guess 18/20 On This Quiz Your IQ Is...

Sponsored | Offbeat



Bill Maher: Hillary Clinton 'committed...



George Will: Young people now consider...

no longer death by a thousand cuts. It's taking a knife to the jugular."

There are an average of 1,000 advisory committees with more than 60,000 members, according to data from the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), that cover a range of topics including disposal of high-level nuclear waste, the depletion of atmospheric ozone, addressing AIDS and improving schools.

They are often filled by people considered to be at the top of their fields who can provide important technical advice, and GSA said the boards and committees "have played an important role in shaping programs and policies of the federal government from the earliest days of the Republic."

Friday's order is the most dramatic step in the Trump administration's escalating pushback to the advisory committees.

Previously, science advisory boards in particular under the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Interior Department have faced numerous instances of resistance and position cuts.

Former EPA head Scott Pruitt in October 2017 issued a directive that barred scientists who received federal grants for studies from also sitting on advisory boards and committees, arguing it was a conflict of interest.

The move was widely viewed as a way to tilt the voices represented on the boards, increasing the number of members who came from industry groups.

"It's clearly a political maneuver to change the composition of these advisory committees," Genna Reed, lead science and policy analyst with the Union of Concerned Scientists, recently told The Hill after the EPA's Science Advisory Board meeting.

Despite the actions, viewed as a muzzling of science by critics, many science advisory boards continued to make critical requests and recommendations. In May 2018, EPA's Science Advisory Board, recommended a review of the agency's decision to roll back a controversial Obama-era policy on auto emissions.

Questions the group posed to the EPA included asking what the repercussions to deploying the new fuel standard may be and how they could best be mitigated, and what the current barriers to consumer acceptance of "redesigned or advanced technology vehicles" are and how those could be overcome.

The board also met last week to discuss the EPA's regulation of cancerlinked chemicals known as PFAS, as well as the agency's controversial proposal to bar consideration of studies that don't make their underlying data public.

Both committees would qualify for cutting under the new executive order.

The White House did not immediately return a request for comment.

An EPA spokesperson said the agency "will review its FACA obligations in line with the President's executive order," referring to the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

An Interior spokesperson said the agency "looks forward to another opportunity to review" their committees, in order to "improve the utility of these advisory committees."

The Interior Department currently has more than 100 federal advisory committees. According to a 2017 internal review, Interior's committees incurred more than \$10 million in direct and indirect costs annually, the spokesperson said.

The review also found that, at the time of review, 41 committees had submitted fewer than 20 recommendations to Interior.

"We will work diligently to implement President Trump's Executive Order on FACAs to eliminate wasteful spending and ensure these advisory committees benefit the American people," the spokesperson said in a statement.

Updated at 7 p.m.

TAGS DONALD TRUMP SCOTT PRUITT





THE HILL 1625 K STREET, NW SUITE 900 WASHINGTON DC 20006 | 202-628-8500 TEL | 202-628-8503 FAX THE CONTENTS OF THIS SITE ARE © 2019 CAPITOL HILL PUBLISHING CORP., A SUBSIDIARY OF NEWS COMMUNICATIONS, INC.



Powered by **FCCDNCTWOCK**