



Scientific integrity is crumbling under Trump

BY KEN KIMMELL AND CHRISTIE TODD WHITMAN, OPINION CONTRIBUTORS — 07/09/19 03:30 PM EDT
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Every day, we benefit from the work done by scientists in the federal government. Farmers and business owners depend on weather monitoring. Families shopping at the grocery store have federal science to thank for food safety inspection and nutrition information. The laws that protect our air and water are based in science. Local governments and first responders rely on federal agencies to track potential disasters and help their communities recover. And accurate, up-to-date scientific information will be vital as we address the increasing risks of climate change.

This isn't work that stays in the lab. We all rely on federal scientists — and we need to be able to trust that we're getting the best available science.

But there's a problem here: Federal scientists often face political pressure that undermines their research and their ability to share it with the public. Political leaders have buried critical reports, keeping the public in the dark about real threats. They have prevented scientists from publishing their research or attending scientific conferences. They have disciplined scientists for talking about their findings to journalists.

Most insidiously, this political interference can push scientists to self-censor, hedging their evidence or declining to pursue research entirely if they fear becoming a political target. A recent survey of federal scientists by the Union of Concerned Scientists showed that scientists see political pressure as a major problem for their work, with more than 2,000