

# ‘Science, not silence:’ thousands gather for March for Science in Denver

By: Piper Davis

The phrase “science, not silence” echoed through a crowd at the March for Science in Denver on April 22, fluctuating in intensity during moments of unintentional harmony among the marchers.

Thousands of people gathered in solidarity on Earth Day, April 22, to fight for the validity of science in fear of the current administration’s stance on the subject. The largest crowd for a march in Denver since the Women’s March, participants paraded through downtown Denver, bearing signs in support of peer review for evidence supported science.



A crowd tens of thousands strong marches through Denver during the March for Science to advocate for science in public policy. (Davis Bonner | Collegian)

Some marchers paraded in lab coats, including two children gripping signs in one hand and their mothers’ hands in the other, shouting, “we are scientists!

We love science!” Knitted brain hats were sprinkled throughout, created to encourage critical thinking and recognizing science as a process, the March for Science’s version of the “pussy hat” which was found at the Women’s March in January.

The 14-block march weaving through Denver concluded at Civic Center park, where activities persisted throughout the rest of the day.

Tents scattered throughout the park shaded informational booths about differing areas of science, labeled a “teach-in.” Booths targeted youth, creating interactive experiences to encourage children to love and find value in science.

Event attendees wound through the booths, exploring different outlets of science and conversing with likeminded individuals. Unique signs drew in crowds, including signs saying, “cause of death: political malpractice” and, “even Dubya is worried.”

Although the event itself did not directly mention President Donald Trump’s administration, the tacit message lingered within the crowd through their signs and chants.



Maddie Lowe (Center) joins the crowd tens of thousands strong during the March for Science in Denver with her mother Amanda Lowe (Rear) and father Tom Lowe (Left). (Davis Bonner | Collegian)

Trump's administration understood the implicit ridicule and released a statement in response to the international Marches for Science.

"My Administration is committed to keeping our air and water clean, to preserving our forests, lakes, and open spaces, and to protecting endangered species," Trump said in an [article from CNN](#). "Economic growth enhances environmental protection. We can and must protect our environment without harming America's working families. That is why my Administration is reducing unnecessary burdens on American workers and American companies, while being mindful that our actions must also protect the environment."

Chris Connelly, an event attendee, boasted a smile alongside Cindy Burkhart as they proudly held their signs high in the middle of the park following the march. Connelly and Burkhart noted their concerns on how science is currently viewed, but believe that marches, much like this one, are necessary for change and unity.

"I'm concerned about this administration's stance on science and rejection of basic science," Connelly said. "It's important to show up and demonstrate that we are here and we are angry and we are involved."

"Also, it's incredible to feel this energy of being with like-minded people," Burkhart said. "I think it's so easy right now to go into this bad place and this is just so positive and wonderful. We are all doing this to remind people that we are still here and fighting. I think the visual effect is important and hopefully sends the message to not only the administration, but to everyone in the nation as well."

Organizers of the event vocalized their support and the significance of the event through a press release posted in March.

"Science benefits and impacts every aspect of humanity including healthcare, technology and the environment," lead organizers said in a joint statement. "The public depends on peer-reviewed studies to help shape policy for the betterment of future generations."

Prominent speakers, including professors, researchers and public figures, presented at the Civic Center in support of the march and to voice their concerns. The crowd ultimately supported speakers, cheering at the mention of peer review and fact-based research.

Yet when Gov. John Hickenlooper took the stage as the last speaker, anti-fracking activists slowly emerged from the sidelines and dispersed themselves in front of Hickenlooper as he spoke, chanting their disapproval for Hickenlooper and pleading for action against fracking.

Anti-fracking activists created a large puppet of Hickenlooper wearing a sign pointing to his cut-out face saying, "Ignores science on fracking, health and climate!"

Hickenlooper has vocalized his support for fracking numerous times, specifically during an interview with Colorado Public Radio when Hickenlooper blatantly rejected the idea of a ban on fracking in Colorado.

"I don't think we can legally do that without grave consequences," Hickenlooper said. "We can't find examples in Colorado, or more than one or two examples, where fracking, in any sense, has caused harm or been sufficiently dangerous to the public that would justify us to ban it."

Despite his support for the fracking industry, Hickenlooper still finds value in science, noting his personal history as a scientist.

"As a geologist, I have come to know that using science doesn't guarantee that you will find a right solution," wrote Hickenlooper in the march's official press

release. "But, in most cases, without using science, you can almost be certain that you will land on the wrong answer. Science impacts Coloradans in ways large and small, how we get healthcare to the air we breathe to the water we drink. Standing up for science means standing up for our way of life. It's more important than ever in our world filled with uncertainty that we support science professionals and all those working to expand knowledge."

Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald, a staff veterinarian at the Alameda East Veterinary Hospital and another speaker at the event, nodded toward Trump during his speech. He discussed how the idea of alternative facts, a common phrase used by Trump, should not affect the validity of science and called for the action of others in a fight for science.

"Science is objective, not subjective," Fitzgerald said. "It studies what is, not what ought to be. You're entitled to your own opinion but not your own facts."

Fitzgerald emphasized supporting science.

"Successes may be temporary, but failures are permanent," Fitzgerald said. "Now is not the time to be defeatists. Some of my colleagues ask me, 'why study and save frogs?' Because I believe by saving frogs, we may learn how to save ourselves."