

Opinion: The NH House needs a climate science intervention

Published: 10-10-2023 4:00 PM

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Thursday, 02/13/2020

TOWN COUNCIL

Public Hearing - Group Petition (NH Resolution to Take Action on Climate Pollution)

Representative Jeanine Notter of Merrimack, the sponsor of 2023 HR17, offers to share copies of fossil fuel industry-funded disinformation about climate pollution with Town Council members. "The Heartland Institute sent me a whole box." [Merrimack Town Council Meeting](#), February 13, 2020.

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When my daughter and I attended a hearing of the NH House Committee on State-Federal Relations and Veterans Affairs last year, I was astonished by the disinformation we heard in the [testimony](#) of two House Science, Technology, and Energy (STE) committee members.

In support of a House resolution calling for ignoring mainstream science and economics, they repeated long-disproven climate myths promoted by fossil fuel industry-funded front groups. My daughter had refuted the fallacies in a Concord Monitor My Turn before the hearing ([“NH Legislature attempts to remove our best climate solution,”](#) Monitor, 1/19/22).

No citizens testified in support of the resolution, five testified in opposition to it, and it was overwhelmingly opposed in online testimony (164 to 4). Yet the committee took the two STE members’ opinions over all the public input and voted HR 17 ought to pass down party lines. The resolution later passed in a House floor vote with only Republican support.

STE Committee members are responsible for advising all House committees on scientific matters. To establish her credibility, one of the HR 17 co-sponsors noted that she had been an STE committee member for five legislative sessions. But her testimony led me to wonder, where did these crazy ideas come from? Climate science denial and the “free market fundamentalist” ideology have long been refuted by experts in science and economics.

Global warming is happening, mainly due to fossil fuel pollution, and policy changes are required to address the market’s failure to account for the costs of that pollution in the prices of fossil fuels. It should not be free to pollute. Experts recommend charging the fossil fuel industry a carbon polluters fee to reduce the pollution and giving the money collected to everyone equally to protect household purchasing power. This is the kind of solution HR 17 resolved not to do.

What do we tell our children, students who get top marks in science classes and are concerned about climate pollution, when House STE committee members disregard mainstream science and our state’s own experts? Adding insult to injury, the other STE member called those who disagreed with his opinion “environmental crusaders” three times in his testimony while my daughter and I waited to share what we knew about climate science from [NASA](#), [NOAA](#), and [UNH](#), and climate policy from our state’s [economic experts](#).

HR 17 was not a sensible, conservative resolution. It was a Koch-inspired statement designed to delay legislation that would address Koch Industries’ pollution.

Charles Koch accrued his wealth from fossil fuel businesses. The Koch network is a group of billionaires who fund out-of-state polluter-friendly legislative initiatives via dozens of front groups, including DonorsTrust, Americans for Prosperity, Heartland Institute, American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and the State Policy Network (of which the Josiah Bartlett Center is the New Hampshire node and the [DonorsTrust](#) “dark-money ATM” a heavy funder).

These groups produce and promote disinformation about what we know through science, push polluting industries’ policies, and delay energy efficiency, electrification, and clean energy progress across the country. They have power in the Concord State House but don’t represent New Hampshire businesses, citizens, or our children’s interests.

The Koch infiltration runs high and deep in New Hampshire. Governor Chris Sununu's connection to the Josiah Bartlett Center goes back to his father, John Sununu, emeritus board member. His brother James is also on the board. One of the STE committee members who sponsored and [testified for HR 17](#), NH House Republican Whip Jeanine Notter, has attended Heartland, ALEC, and similar groups' conferences in California, Texas, and Florida on [all-expenses-paid trips](#) courtesy of Koch-funded front groups valued over \$11,500 in the last five years.

She [distributes their pamphlets](#) and pushes their polluter priorities in legislation. State legislators' mailboxes are periodically stuffed with Koch front-group propaganda pushing climate opinions not supported by any scientific organization.

When New Hampshire's elected leaders are guided by out-of-state fossil fuel industry-funded groups rather than by [Climate Assessment Reports](#) from our state's official climatologist and information from the NH Department of Environmental Services (des.nh.gov/climate-and-sustainability/climate-change), New Hampshire citizens pay the consequences.

Our state lags behind our neighbors in solar installations, EV adoption, charging station deployments, and energy efficiency. We suffered far more than our neighbors when gas, oil, and electricity prices shot up due to the recent Saudi market manipulation and boycott of Russian gas.

How can we demonstrate to our children that our democratic system works for us? We need to help state leaders break their blind allegiance to out-of-state fossil fuel industry interests. The NH House STE committee leadership needs a climate science intervention.

Representative Michael Vose of Epping, chairman of the STE committee, can not be pleased when two of his committee members promote climate science misinformation as members of his committee. To clear up their confusion, he should invite state climate science and economic experts to an STE committee Q&A hearing.

None of the Democrats on the STE committee suffer from those delusions. But until something changes, the STE Republican majority will continue leading the NH Legislature astray on climate and energy policy, misguided by ideology and out-of-state polluters' interests.

The first step to addressing a problem is admitting you have one. There are beneficial bipartisan solutions such as [Carbon Fee and Dividend](#), and our state should use them to prepare for major global policy and climate changes that are headed our way.

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