Testimony of Dr. Gretchen Goldman
President and CEO
Union Of Concerned Scientists
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Spotlight Hearing
Tuesday, September 29, 2026

Ranking Member Whitehouse, Members of the Environment and Public Works Committee - My name is Dr. Gretchen Goldman, and I am President and CEO of the Union of Concerned Scientists, a science advocacy organization with more than 600,000 supporters nationwide – including scientists, engineers, and concerned citizens from all backgrounds.

Rigorous, independent science has long been a cornerstone of US leadership in research, technology, medicine, innovation, and security. Federal funding seeded early research into the internet, Doppler radar, MRI technology, and sequencing the human genome, just to name a few examples.

Federal scientists do critical work that keeps us all healthier and safer, whether we realize it or not.

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientists protect our local communities from deadly severe weather;
- Scientists at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and at the Food and Drug Administration work quickly to identify and contain food-borne illness and infectious disease outbreaks, and
- The National Institutes of Health is the largest funder of lifesaving biomedical research in the world.

These science agencies work on behalf of the American people, are paid for by American tax dollars, and are staffed by dedicated public servants.

Or at least they used to be.

The Trump Administration has engaged in an all-out assault on these and other science agencies and programs across the federal government, harming the American people and enriching the powerful and the polluting.

UCS has identified more than 600 such attacks in just the first 18 months of the current Administration.

From weakening health safeguards and pollution standards, to gutting scientific infrastructure and censoring data, these attacks on science jeopardize people's health and wellbeing, endanger our long-term investments in safety, security, and innovation, and threaten our standing as a world leader.

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Attacks on Federal Scientists

Since inauguration day in 2025, nearly 95,000 science employees, including 10,000 PhDs, have left their jobs, resulting in centuries of lost scientific expertise and institutional memory.

NOAA lost more than 1800 employees during the first 6 months of the administration, amounting to the departure of more than 27,000 years of experience.

In addition to NOAA, the CDC, Environmental Protection Agency, and National Science Foundation all lost significant numbers of scientific staff, threatening their ability to carry out their missions.

Attacks on science-based regulations

The Administration has particularly singled out climate science in their attacks, adopting fossil fuel industry talking points and going after policies informed by the best available science—all while putting people's lives and health at risk as the impacts of climate change rapidly worsen.

Among the most egregious examples of this is the EPA's recent repeal of the 2009 Endangerment Finding, a science-based legal finding which affirmed the agency's statutory obligation under the Clean Air Act to regulate health-harming, heat-trapping emissions.

As the National Academies highlighted in their own recent report, the scientific evidence for current and future public health harms from human-caused, heat-trapping emissions is beyond scientific dispute and has only grown stronger since 2009 . The administration is now using this repeal as a justification to overturn standards to limit global warming pollution from vehicles and power plants.

The Trump administration has also targeted the regulations and safeguards that keep politics out of what should be science-based decisions.

They have admitted to canceling scientific funding in states the President did not win, destroying funding based on key-word searches for research related to at-risk populations, and demolishing Congressionally mandated climate activities, like the US Global Change Research Program.

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The Role of the Fossil Fuel Industry

The motivation for such a coordinated and sustained assault on the federal scientific enterprise is part of an extreme, anti-science, ideological agenda -- but goes beyond that.

The Administration is delivering on promises it has made to special interests who profit from stymieing innovation – and in the case of climate science, that special interest is the fossil fuel industry.

At the direction of the industry, the Trump Administration is leveraging the full power of the federal government to attack science to protect industry profits and evade accountability -- all at the expense of the American people and the planet.

Attribution science, which identifies and quantifies the contributions of climate change to long-term trends and extreme events, is a robust scientific discipline that has been cited by consensus scientific reports like those from the IPCC and our own National Climate Assessment. Given its centrality in legal efforts to hold the fossil fuel industry accountable, attribution research has become a lightning rod for attacks by government leaders and industry allies.

Industry is so concerned about this growing scientific evidence that it is seeking legislation from this Congress to provide legal immunity to the fossil fuel industry for the harm they know they have caused.

Coordinated attacks on FEMA, NOAA, EPA, NSF, NCAR and other agencies and programs are all part of a coordinated campaign to try to bury the evidence of climate change even as people experience its harsh impacts – all to protect the profit margins of fossil fuel companies.

Closing

Independent science, access to scientific expertise, and strong support of scientific inquiry are critical pillars of a strong democracy. Its attacks on *inconvenient* scientific findings highlight the corporate capture and corruption that have come to define the 2nd Trump Administration, and it is people across the US and the world who will suffer the consequences.