

## **Human-Caused Global Warming? Science Says Yes**

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I am sure it is difficult at this point for ordinary, concerned, busy people to follow the global warming discussion. Opinions and accusations are flying. We need to take immediate action to save the climate. No, we don't. Yes, we do. The debate has been raging in the pages of this newspaper. Everybody seems to be citing evidence. Who is right?

I'm not a scientist and you probably aren't either. But it's not as difficult as it seems to come to an informed opinion about this issue. It's a question of knowing what sources to trust.

Science has been politicized. But science is not politics. In politics everybody has an opinion, and facts to back it up, and the democratic process is supposed to decide who is right and who is wrong. Most of us feel free to pick and choose our political opinions, and feel justified in our belief that our opinions are as good as anybody else's.

Scientists keep trying to tell us that the scientific process works differently. They talk about peer-reviewed literature and probably lose a lot of us. The basic points, for the lay person, are these.

- Data is gathered through a process in which many different teams of scientists develop and carry out their own experiments and studies. Some of these studies support each other and some do not. In a highly competitive field, it makes more of a stir to prove somebody wrong than prove them right. Scientists are always trying to one-up each other.

- All these separate studies produce a body of evidence. Some of it points in different directions. Groups of scientists get together to sift through the evidence and determine which way it is trending overall.

- National and international organizations exist to summarize the state of the research in different fields, and explain it to the rest of us. The members are all top scientists in their fields, and membership is an honor. These organizations include National Academies of Sciences and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

As a teacher, it is my job to show students how to identify credible sources. As a citizen, I consider it my job to do the same.

When I want to know what mainstream science says, I look at statements from the top organizations in the field. With a quick Google search, I found what the U.S. National Academy of Sciences has said most recently about global warming: "The need for urgent action to address climate change is now indisputable." This statement is endorsed not only by our own Academy of Sciences, but by the Academies of 12 other countries.

There have been a lot of claims about an international "conspiracy" of scientists who are trying to

manufacture a "hoax." We should be asking ourselves: How and why would these scientists do such a thing? What would be the mechanism that could allow these people to work together to defraud the rest of us? Who would fund such a thing? Let's not kid ourselves that alternative energy companies have that kind of money. They couldn't possibly compete with the fossil fuel giants.

For 10 years, I have been a member of the New Mexico Coalition for Excellence in Science and Math Education. This group includes scientists, engineers and educators. During that time, I have seen the group move from diverse opinions about global warming to general agreement. The reason? A group conspiracy? No, the evidence has become overwhelming. Human-caused global warming is changing the climate. Mainstream science is increasingly, urgently trying to tell us so.

We ignore its voice at our peril.

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