



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 20, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

Thank you and your team for your prescient and forceful attention to the role of science in U.S. policymaking and governing. Scientific integrity standards go to the heart of that work, ensuring the quality and reliability of federal science—both data and analysis—that our governments, businesses, and individuals rely on. We pay a steep and multi-generational price when the science that America’s policymakers, economic leaders, educators and the public rely on is distorted, manipulated, or suppressed for political or private gain. **We urge your administration to leverage the momentum you have built as a champion of science to take immediate action and establish strong scientific integrity policies as a standard across the federal government. This single step will add to your ongoing efforts to undo steps by the Trump administration to deprioritize, censor, and stall climate science, and to safeguard federal science from any such interference in the future.**

Scientific integrity policies currently exist at varying levels of rigor and enforcement at several science-oriented federal agencies. These policies set standards for how objective, independent science will be conducted and reported. When fully enforced, these policies ensure that federally produced or funded scientific data and analysis is truly objective, independent, and can be relied on by lawmakers and policymakers as free from meddling from powerful political or financial interests.

Public science in America’s federal agencies informs national policy on everything from pesticides to power grids, and it sheds important light on all aspects of American life. For example, our nation’s cities and states rely on federal agencies to provide credible information and guidance to combat climate change. Our families need to know if unsafe chemicals are being sprayed on their food, dumped in their water, or added into the products they buy. All of us need to know that we can trust our leaders and our government to tell the truth, whether regarding the

safety of vaccines, chemicals, food or consumer products, and much more. Scientific integrity policies are the foundation for that faith and confidence.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exposed an urgent need for our federal agencies to further develop, strengthen, and enforce their scientific integrity policies. Currently, differences in the strength and specificity of such scientific guidelines at federal agencies are compromising their effectiveness, especially on issues that span multiple agencies such as addressing the coronavirus pandemic, coordinating climate action and disaster response, and other critical emergency response efforts.

As a powerful first step, we encourage your administration to work with us in Congress to pass and implement the Scientific Integrity Act, practical bipartisan legislation passed on several occasions by the House during the 116th Congress. The Scientific Integrity Act requires federal agencies that fund or direct public science to establish and maintain clear scientific integrity principles; formalizes these policies and strengthens them with the force of law and clarifies that science should determine policy, free from inappropriate politics, ideology, or financial conflicts of interest; and holds public scientists to the highest standards while guaranteeing their rights and protections under the law.

In effect, the Scientific Integrity Act builds a high wall around public scientific research and reports, protecting them from any undue influence by political or special interests and ensuring scientists, members of Congress and the American people can have real trust and confidence in the results.

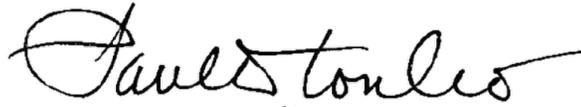
We are greatly encouraged by your decision to elevate the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to a Cabinet-level agency and hope you will add to this a strong focus on scientific integrity across all federal science agencies from the very earliest days of your administration. As you know, Congress relies on OSTP to play a critical role in setting the U.S. science and technology agenda, coordinating agency experts, researchers, academics and other scientific leaders to build and implement that agenda. OSTP is incredibly important for charting our path to solving some of our nation's, and even the world's, most significant science-based challenges.

OSTP is well-positioned to convene interagency meetings on scientific integrity to facilitate coordination, identify best practices, and play a coordinating role in resolving interagency scientific integrity issues. More than 20 federal agencies currently have some form of scientific integrity policy, but these standards vary in scope and specificity. Enacting scientific integrity standards through the bipartisan Scientific Integrity Act—as well as through direct executive action—would create a clear set of standards and mechanisms for enforcement. As part of a review of existing scientific integrity policies, OSTP should study how these policies might interact and seek to resolve conflicts between agencies and subagencies.

Scientific integrity embodies the principles that solidify public trust in the conduct, dissemination, and use of scientific research to run the Federal government safely and effectively. Sadly, recent years have shown science in retreat in our governing and public discourse. In this moment, strengthening our systems for free and independent public science is one of the most important, most urgent things we can do to equip ourselves for the challenges ahead, for ourselves, our children, and for generations to come.

We look forward to working with you on this issue of critical importance. Thank you for your leadership, and congratulations on your presidency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul D. Tonko". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Haley Stevens". The signature is cursive and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Haley Stevens
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alan Lowenthal". The signature is cursive and flows across the line.

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress