

2019BCDCC-015-190814- GOVT – PROTECT SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARDS

Whereas the 1972 Advisory Committee Act (Public Law 92-463, 86 Stat 770) authorizes Federal governmental agencies to establish advisory committees and boards to assist them in making policy decisions and establishing regulations;

Whereas at the end of the Obama Administration there were around 1,000 committees, including about 200 Scientific Advisory Boards (SABs) in the federal government working with agencies such as the EPA, FDA, USDA, and NOAA;

Whereas these committees provide a check on the administration making politically-inspired policy reversals and regulatory changes;

Whereas input of impartial scientific experts on these SABs helps the government to make better-informed evidence-based policy decisions and regulations, by advising agencies on what current science says about the consequences of policy decisions and regulations;

Whereas the current President issued an executive order last June to slash the number of federal advisory committees, including SABs which advise the government on public health, climate change, agriculture, and the environment, by at least 30% [1];

Whereas the current administration since 2017 has postponed or canceled meetings of SABs, has dismissed experienced experts, and has changed the rules for appointing expert members of SABs to enable stacking these boards with individuals who favor certain industries or administration policies, whether or not they have any scientific subject expertise, and in some cases SABs have been sidelined or completely disbanded [2,3,4];

Whereas these moves by the current administration are aligned with a general disrespecting of science rampant in certain sectors of the political landscape in this country, along with a policy of ignoring facts that inconvenience special interests;

Whereas any country ignores scientific evidence pertaining to economic, public health, agriculture, energy and environmental disruption at its peril;

Therefore, be it resolved that we, the BCDCC urge our legislative delegations from all political parties to call on the Governmental Accountability Office to assess whether our federal agencies are currently carrying out the federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 appropriately;

Be it further resolved that we, the BCDCC urge our legislative delegations to hold Congressional hearings on the condition of the SABs, with special attention on their sidelining and hijacking by the current administration, with the goal of ensuring that the national and public interest are preserved.

Be it finally resolved that the SABs be protected and enhanced rather than defanged and disbanded, for the good of the long-term national public interest.

References:

[1] <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/danvergano/trump-cuts-advisory-panels>, June 15, 2019.

[2] Sidelining Science on Air Pollution Standards: UCS Fights Back. In <https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2019/05/Catalyst-Spring-2019.pdf>, page 7.

[3] https://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/s3fs-public/Scientific%20Organizations%20Statement%20on%20Science%20and%20Government_6.27.2017.pdf

[4] https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/15/climate/epa-advisory-panels-gao-report.html?et_rid=247858142&et_cid=2916523

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