

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 28, 2019

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are deeply concerned about recent reports that the National Security Council (NSC) is planning to assemble a secret panel, led by a discredited climate change denier, to undermine the overwhelming scientific consensus on the nature and threats of climate change, including to the national security of the United States.<sup>1</sup>

We are particularly concerned that this panel reportedly will not be subject to the rules of a Federal Advisory Committee, allowing for significant subjective discretion in the composition of the panel, the level of information disclosed to the public by the panel, and the assurance that the panel will not be inappropriately influenced by any special interests.<sup>2</sup>

The decision to convene this NSC panel represents yet another action by your Administration in a line of many that run counter to the overwhelming scientific consensus on the causes and impacts of climate change. A recent report from the Union of Concerned Scientists documents the various attacks on science from your Administration, which include the omission of climate change science by the Department of Interior in decision-making, despite the requirement to include this by federal law, and the removal of climate

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<sup>1</sup> Juliet Eilperin, Josh Dawsey, and Brady Dennis, *White House to set up panel to counter climate change consensus, officials say*, Washington Post, February 24, 2019, accessed here: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/white-house-to-select-federal-scientists-to-reassess-government-climate-findings-sources-say/2019/02/24/49cd0a84-37dd-11e9-af5b-b51b7ff322e9\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.b82ce2f22375](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/white-house-to-select-federal-scientists-to-reassess-government-climate-findings-sources-say/2019/02/24/49cd0a84-37dd-11e9-af5b-b51b7ff322e9_story.html?utm_term=.b82ce2f22375)

<sup>2</sup> *The Federal Advisory Committee Act*, Pub. L. 92-463

change language from an interagency EPA review of a draft of the Affordable Clean Energy Rule, among many other examples.<sup>3</sup>

Recently, your Administration released the Fourth National Climate Assessment (NCA) on the day after Thanksgiving, Friday, November 23, 2018. Despite trying to bury the NCA during a holiday weekend, the NCA brought widespread attention to the significant economic and social impacts that climate change is already having in the U.S. and is projected to have without significant global mitigation efforts. The report was compiled by a team of over 300 experts and peer-reviewed by a number of external entities, including the National Academies. The report states, “Earth’s climate is now changing faster than at any point in the history of modern civilization, primarily as a result of human activities. The impacts of global climate change are already being felt in the United States and are projected to intensify in the future.”<sup>4</sup>

Earlier this year, the Department of Defense (DoD) released its “Report on Effects of a Changing Climate to the Department of Defense”<sup>5</sup> which clearly stated: “The effects of a changing climate are a national security issue with potential impacts to the Department of Defense missions, operational plans, and installations.”<sup>6</sup> As an example, DoD warned that “two-thirds of the 79 installations addressed in this report are vulnerable to current or future recurrent flooding and more than one-half are vulnerable to current or future drought. About one-half are vulnerable to wildfires.”<sup>7</sup> This has led the DoD to incorporate climate resilience in a cross-cutting fashion in all its decision-making processes and not as a separate program.

Your own Director of National Intelligence, Daniel Coats, provided testimony last February to the Senate Intelligence Committee<sup>8</sup> on how certain consequences of climate change, specifically “more air pollution, biodiversity loss, and water scarcity,” could potentially lead to social and economic upheaval.

Given the previous statements you have made that fly in the face of explicit scientific evidence<sup>9</sup> and the findings of your own DoD and Director of National Intelligence, we have

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<sup>3</sup> Union of Concerned Scientists, *The State of Science in the Trump Era*, January 2019, accessed here: <https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2019/01/ucs-trump-2yrs-report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> *Fourth National Climate Assessment, Volume II*, U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, D.C., U.S.A., November 23, 2018, accessed here: <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>

<sup>5</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Effects of a Changing Climate to the Department of Defense*, January 2019, accessed here: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/5689153-DoD-Final-Climate-Report.html>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, February 13, 2018, accessed here: <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Testimonies/2018-ATA---Unclassified-SSCI.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> For example, In response to the NCA, you stated, “‘I’ve seen it, I’ve read some of it, and it’s fine,’ ... Asked about [the] severe economic impacts [mentioned in the report], [you] said, ‘I don’t believe it.’” Timothy Gardner, Jeff Mason, *Trump rejects findings of U.S. government climate change report*, Reuters, November 26, 2018, accessed here: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-climatechange-trump/trump-rejects-findings-of-us-government-climate-change-report-idUSKCN1NV2IG>

serious concerns about any effort to construct a secret committee to question the basic scientific fact of climate change.

We are also concerned about the reported central involvement of William Happer in these efforts. In addition to the fact that William Happer is not a climate scientist, he is also well known for making ludicrous public statements about climate change. For instance, during a television interview, Dr. Happer once stated, “The demonization of carbon dioxide is just like the demonization of the poor Jews under Hitler.”<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Happer does not have the qualifications to serve on a working group that should be composed of climate scientists, if it is to exist at all. Dr. Happer is an atomic physicist, not an expert on climate, and his statements on climate change have been repeatedly debunked by actual climate scientists.<sup>11</sup> It is deeply concerning that Dr. Happer appears to be spearheading the NSC’s new efforts to undermine the consensus regarding the national security implications of climate change.

We wish to better understand the nature of the panel that you are organizing. To assist in our evaluation, we request that the Administration:

1. Immediately provide to our committees the names and backgrounds of anyone who will be serving on or staffing any working group, task force, or other body under the auspices of the NSC or any other part of the Executive Office of the President, which is designed to study or report on the connection between climate change and national security, as soon as they are named.
2. Subject any such working group, task force, or other body to the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.
3. Preserve all documents, records, memoranda, meeting minutes, communication and other data generated that is related to such a working group, task force, or other body.
4. Provide regular detailed updates to our committees on the status and activities of the working group, at least monthly.

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<sup>10</sup> Devan Cole, *Washington Post: Climate skeptic may lead WH panel to study climate change and nation security*. CNN, February 21, 2019, accessed here: <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/20/politics/white-house-climate-panel-william-happer/index.html>

<sup>11</sup> For example, at [http://www.climate-science-watch.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/The-Real-Truth-About-Greenhouse-Gases-and-Climate-Change\\_1.pdf](http://www.climate-science-watch.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/The-Real-Truth-About-Greenhouse-Gases-and-Climate-Change_1.pdf)

Please provide this information no later than March 15, 2019. If you have any questions about this request, please have your staff contact Mr. Paul Arcangeli at 202-225-4151.

Thank you for your timely attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



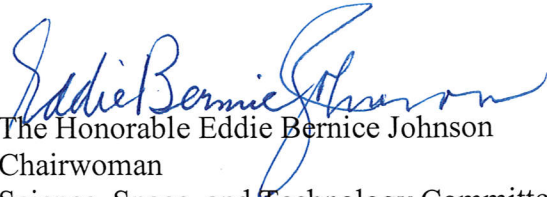
The Honorable Adam Smith  
Chairman  
Armed Services Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives



The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Chairman  
Energy and Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives



The Honorable Raúl Grijalva  
Chairman  
Natural Resources Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives



The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Chairwoman  
Science, Space, and Technology Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives