

The Honorable Joe Barton, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
The Honorable Ed Whitfield, Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Friday, July 15, 2005

Dear Chairman Barton and Chairman Whitfield,

As scientists with expertise relevant to the understanding of Earth's changing climate, we are writing to help inform the inquiry you are conducting on the work of Drs. Michael Mann, Ray Bradley, and Malcolm Hughes. We understand that as a representative of the American people, you have a responsibility to inform yourself and your colleagues about scientific knowledge that is relevant to policy decisions. However, we are deeply concerned about your approach and we respectfully submit the following clarifying context.

In your letters of June 23, 2005, to these scientists, you state, "We open this review because this dispute surrounding your studies bears directly on important questions about the federally funded work upon which climate studies rely." In fact, the specific findings of Mann et al. constitute only one item among literally thousands of pieces of evidence that have contributed to the present consensus on the serious nature of climate change. While the 2001 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlighted this work as a useful *illustration* of our understanding of the impact of fossil fuel-related emissions on climate change, in no way does the report suggest that it is an essential element of that understanding. This understanding has been developed over many years from many diverse lines of inquiry.

There are legitimate areas of scientific debate over the best methodologies to apply in reconstructing historic temperatures, as there are in many topics of current scientific interest. However, the essential points of the Mann et al. study—that the late twentieth century likely included the warmest decades in the last millennium—are supported by numerous other studies. We refer the committee to the full reports by the IPCC, the 2001 review of the Third Assessment report by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, and the June 7 statement from the NAS and other leading science academies for balanced assessments of the current state of the science.

We also note that much of the information that you have requested from the scientists involved is unrelated to the stated purpose of your investigation. Requests to provide all working materials related to hundreds of publications stretching back decades can be seen as intimidation—intentional or not—and thereby risks compromising the independence of scientific opinion that is vital to the preeminence of American science as well as to the flow of objective advice to the government.

We welcome your interest in the science of climate change and hope that as a community, we can help your committee shape public policy in the light of the best available scientific knowledge.

Respectfully,

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