

Counteract Politicization of Federal Science Policy

The federal politicization of science in many areas is harming science itself. Ethics rules and advisory panel guidelines are imposing significant restrictions on scientists' involvement with for-profit entities, thereby freezing commercial interests out of the science policy debate and in effect isolating the market from the marketplace of ideas. With industry R&D investment now double federal funding for the same, this is a significant problem.

Moreover, government patronage today threatens to distort science in several areas. We have seen stark evidence of this in the Climategate scandal, where a clique of scientists who were

recipients of large amounts of federal science funding, even some based overseas, conspired to ensure their interpretation of science remained the dominant one to the exclusion of those outside the system. If science is to be insulated from the risks associated with patronage, a new, innovative system of federal funding needs to be adopted. One option is the replacement of the current grant system with one based on prizes, lotteries, and loans—a system that would reduce the influence of the politician and grant officer and increase the freedom of the scientist.

Iain Murray