

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2016/09/26/trumps-transition-team-includes-a-major-skeptic-of-mainstream-climate-change-science/?utm_source=rss_energy-environment&utm_term=.857ac849ae0e

Energy and Environment

Trump's transition team has tapped a longtime climate skeptic to set environmental policy

By Steven Mufson September 26 at 2:13 PM



FILE – In this Thursday, Sept. 22, 2016 fie photo, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks at the Shale Insight Conference, in Pittsburgh. With a tightly controlled state media, little access to outside news and a deep belief that whoever runs the White House is bound to be their sworn enemy, North Koreans aren't expecting much from the U.S. elections – if they know about them at all. (AP Photo/ Evan Vucci)

Donald J. Trump's transition team for the Environmental Protection Agency includes a person who has raised doubts about the mainstream scientific consensus that climate change is happening and is caused largely by humans, according to a person familiar with the transition.

Myron Ebell, who works on energy and environment issues at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, has also said that efforts to slow climate change would cost too much money and hurt the world's poor. He said President Obama's Clean Power Plan, which he considers illegal, should be called the Costly Power Plan.

"There has been a little bit of warming," he told Vanity Fair in 2007, "but it's been very modest and well within the range for natural variability, and whether it's caused by human beings or not, it's nothing to worry about."

In recent years, the Competitive Enterprise Institute has been funded largely by Donors Trust, a Virginia-based organization that is not required to disclose its contributors. Donors Trust is staffed largely by people who have worked for Koch Industries or non-profit groups supported by the conservative Koch brothers. And it has given to other non-profit groups supported by the Kochs. According to Conservative Transparency, a group that tracks funding, Donors Trust gave CEI about $1.4 million in 2014, the most recent year it calculated.

Ebell referred questions to the Trump transition team or campaign. Trump campaign spokesmen did not immediately reply to queries.

Trump's team of energy and environment advisers also includes Washington veterans who have lobbied for the coal, oil and gas and utility industries. The make up of the group suggests that a Trump administration would make far-reaching changes at Energy, Interior and EPA.

Discussing the Competitive Enterprise Institute's efforts to oppose efforts to slow climate change, Ebell, in a 2012 interview on public television's Frontline documentary show, said "we did it because we believed that the consensus was phony. We believed that the so-called global warming consensus was not based on science, but was a political consensus, which included a number of scientists."

In July this year, at a meeting held by the Republican Attorneys General Association, Ebell argued that scientists who make the case for climate change have altered statistics and he has argued that environmental groups have tried to suppress people like him because of their views.



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"So what does the other side do? Well the first thing they try to do is try to change reality. They try to change the facts," Ebell said at the July meeting of the Republicans Attorneys General Association according to a recording of the event provided by the Center for Media and Democracy. "So they try to reinterpret the data."

Ebell has also argued for opening up more federal lands for logging. oil and gas exploration and coal mining and he has urged the Senate to vote to reject the Paris climate accord.

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Earlier, in the 2000s, CEI received about $2 million in contributions from ExxonMobil. In 2007, Exxon decided to end funding.

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The July meeting of Republican attorneys general was devoted to figuring out how best the Republican AGs could respond to Democratic attorneys general who had issued subpoenas to ExxonMobil seeking evidence that the oil giant understood the dangers of climate change as early as the 1970s and that it failed to disclose the risks to the public and investors.

Ebell told the attorneys general at the July meeting: "I would just say this is about free speech and we need to keep driving that point because free speech, the constitutional protection of free speech, is not to protect the rights of the majority, it's to protect the people who are, do not occupy the positions of authority, it's the little people."

"Donald Trump's selection of Myron Ebell shows again what a grave danger he is to our environment and our children's future," Elizabeth Thompson, president of Environmental Defense Fund Action, said in a statement. She called it "a dark foreshadowing of the world we'd get with Donald Trump as president."

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Steven Mufson covers energy and other financial matters. Since joining The Post, he has covered the White House, China, economic policy and diplomacy. Follow @StevenMufson.
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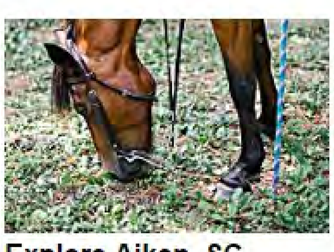


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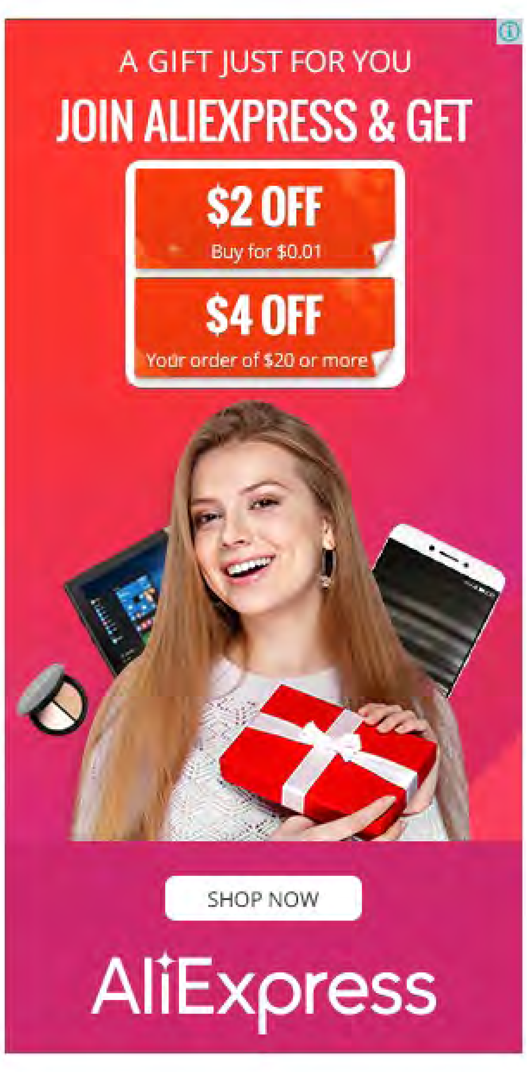
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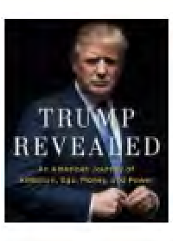
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