

Wall Street Journal's Attempts to Politicize National Climate Assessment Fall Flat

In response to the release of the latest [National Climate Assessment \(NCA\)](#), the Wall Street Journal has unleashed an unfortunately typical stream of distractions, straw men, and outright falsehoods in the form of an editorial as well as an op-ed by Steven F. Hayward. Both pieces seek to portray the assessment as politicized, practically suggesting that President Obama personally composed the report off the top of his head. But neither the President nor the administration wrote the report: scientists did. The attempts to imply political subterfuge show how increasingly desperate the detractors of climate science are growing, and how unable they are to engage with the science itself.

The report's conclusions are in fact completely uncontroversial in the world of science, and should be considered separately from the political drama which some are trying to impose on them.

- **The report was written by scientists.** To be exact, hundreds of authors, each experts in their respective fields, cited over 3,000 individual studies to create the final product. The report received thousands of public comments and review from both green groups and industry groups, and was reviewed by the National Academy of Sciences. A spokesperson from oil giant Chevron [endorsed the report](#), saying, "Chevron recognizes and shares the concerns of governments and the public about climate change." The report is one of a series mandated by Congress in the U.S. Global Change Research Act, enacted during the administration of George H.W. Bush. And the report's conclusions echo the latest findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a global scientific organization completely outside the scope of the U.S. administration.
- **The summary reflects the balance of the evidence.** In an attempt to show that the summary is "politicized," the WSJ editorial quotes a line from the underlying chapters about uncertainty over trends in tornadoes. However, the summary states that climate change is worsening extreme weather, because it is: [heat waves](#), [extreme precipitation](#), [wildfires](#), [higher storm surges](#), and increased drought in currently dry areas all show clear climate connections that are reflected in the assessment. Tornadoes are an outlier to this body of evidence, and using them as a primary example is transparently misleading.
- **The report doesn't prescribe political action.** It shows we have a problem, and that Americans' livelihoods will be harmed if we don't take action to fix it. It's not surprising that these conclusions would be unpopular with Hayward, who is a [board member](#) and treasurer for the [Donors Capital Fund](#), described as the Koch brothers' "[dark-money ATM](#)." Strategically, these groups are trying to preemptively discredit the report to forestall any potential future action. But the

report itself does not take political sides or advocate any one policy solution over others.

- **Inaction on climate change poses serious economic risks.** Both the IPCC and NCA support this conclusion, contrary to the suggestions in both WSJ pieces that climate action would derail the economy. The NCA documents the growing evidence of climate change impacts, with clear economic implications for coastal properties, fisheries, water resources, transportation infrastructure, energy availability, and more. The latest IPCC report further concluded that delaying action would be far costlier than taking action immediately.
- **Climate change is caused by humans.** This statement is the definition of old news, yet both WSJ pieces imply the opposite. From the editorial we get the tired old maxim that we've had extreme weather in the distant past, so there can't possibly be a human contribution. Hayward claims outright that proof of human-caused climate change "is far from definitive." This is simply not true. The latest IPCC report's best estimate is that *all* of modern climate change was caused by humans, and possibly more (this is possible because natural factors may have actually reduced the observed warming). It just doesn't get more definitive than that, and Hayward is unwilling to acknowledge this simple fact.

The National Climate Assessment is a scientific document, not a political one. Its findings are of [immediate practical use](#) to Americans in all regions and economic sectors of the country. It provides a blueprint for actions as simple and commonsense as raising roadways that are now routinely flooded due to sea level rise, an occurrence that [Miami knows all too well](#). Despite the obvious utility of this information, some politically motivated voices are trying to stigmatize it, and the Wall Street Journal is handing them a megaphone. But the facts themselves are undeniable, even if the Journal fails to show them clearly to its readers.