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THE HOUNDING OF ROGER PIELKE JR

Donna Laframboise

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About the author

Donna Laframboise is a Canadian investigative journalist. She is the author of a 2011 exposé of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *The Delinquent Teenager Who Was Mistaken for the World's Top Climate Expert*. Her 2013 book, *Into the Dustbin: Rajendra Pachauri, the Climate Report & the Nobel Peace Prize*, examines the leadership of that organization. She is a former columnist and editorial board member of the *National Post*, and a former vice president of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. She has never belonged to any political party, and has voted across the political spectrum. She currently blogs at BigPicNews.com.

“Should one just stay silent, maintaining a dignified academic distance, but also maintaining irrelevance?”

Roger Pielke Jr



Executive summary

Climate change, we're told, threatens the 'viability of our societies'. In August 2021, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres declared the alarm bells 'deafening'. If this is even remotely the case, humanity is in urgent need of clear thinking.

But the climate movement rejects clear thinking. It has little interest in sorting facts from fiction, in ensuring its efforts are based on evidence rather than dogma. The hostility and venom directed at Roger Pielke Jr, a natural disasters expert who wholeheartedly supports decarbonisation of the global economy, demonstrates this beyond doubt.

Stray but a little from the dominant climate narrative, and activists will fantasise about your violent death. They will dismiss your peer-reviewed publications as marginal, accuse you of spreading disinformation, and successfully campaign to get you fired from part-time jobs. They will publish false allegations about you on the White House website, target journalists who quote you in news stories, and subject you to punitive, intrusive, and extensive financial investigation.

In recent years, Roger Pielke Jr has further discovered that academic freedom is an empty slogan at the University of Colorado (Boulder), his primary employer. Rather than defending its most senior environmental studies professor, his own department is now determinedly harassing and humiliating him.

The Hounding of Roger Pielke Jr

Four days after Christmas 2009, an alternative newspaper in northern New York state published an article purporting to identify the '15 Most Heinous Climate Criminals...bastards responsible for subverting public understanding of climate change'.¹ Eschewing goodwill toward men, author and climate activist Michael Roddy² declared these individuals liars corrupted by corporate interests. Their climate stance would, he said, result in human casualties dwarfing those inflicted by history's worst mass murderers.

In addition to defaming these people, the article assigned them lurid punishments.³ Roger Pielke Jr, then a mild-mannered 41-year-old environmental studies professor at the University of Colorado Boulder, received a death sentence. The article describes him wandering in the wilderness, lost and starving, before 'hyenas laugh and rip him to shreds'.

Readers were told Pielke routinely expresses the kinds of concerns that dominate climate sceptic blogs. But that has never been the case. His 2010 book, *The Climate Fix*, says he grew up as 'the son of a world-famous atmospheric scientist', Roger Pielke Sr. Having gained a 'pretty in-depth understanding of the atmospheric sciences' around the dinner table, he says he has 'never questioned the climatic importance of human emissions of carbon dioxide', and fully supports a dramatic 'decarbonization of the global economy'.⁴ *The Climate Fix* calls for a modest carbon tax to fund the development of innovative energy technologies. Moreover, Pielke leans left politically. In 2018, he told an audience he has never once voted for a Republican presidential candidate.⁵ Yet he has endured more than a decade of harassment and persecution from US Democratic Party operatives, green campaigners, journalists, and academic colleagues. His crime? Championing clear thinking and honest scholarship.

While acquiring an undergraduate degree in mathematics in the late 1980s, Pielke landed a part-time job with the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), then home to prominent climate scientists such as Steven Schneider and Kevin Trenberth. At that moment in history, international concern about global warming was gathering steam, and atmospheric scientists were gaining political influence.

Pielke had intended to return to the physical sciences after completing a Masters in Public Policy. But during a stint as an intern with the Science Committee of the US House of Representatives, he realised how profoundly politicians and scientists misunderstand each other's roles and constraints. Fascinated by the intersection of these disparate worlds, and hoping to improve dialogue between them, by 1994 he'd earned a PhD in science policy.

The next dozen years were hectic. Pielke worked with NCAR, Columbia University, Arizona State, and the University of Illinois. He was awarded Germany's Eduard Brückner Outstanding Achievement Prize, and chaired an American Meteorological Society committee for three years. Numerous other entities welcomed

his input in an advisory capacity, from the National Science Foundation to the World Meteorological Organization.⁶ By 2001, Pielke had won tenure in the environmental studies program at the University of Colorado Boulder (CU), and was quickly promoted to full professor in 2004. He was tasked with developing graduate level courses that later attracted keen students and earned international acclaim.

In what he semi-humorously refers to as the 'apex of my career', in early 2006 he delivered the prestigious Roger Revelle annual lecture, a gala event sponsored by the US National Academy of Sciences and hosted by the Smithsonian Institute in the nation's capital.⁷ Declaring fealty to the climate cause, Pielke told his audience 'human influence on the climate system has been well established'. Reducing global carbon dioxide emissions is, he said, 'essential'.

But he also delivered some unpalatable truths. Global warming isn't making natural disasters worse, he insisted. These are separate problems, with different solutions. Pielke acknowledged that the cost of replacing damaged property in the wake of natural disasters was rising. But that's because more people now live near coastlines vulnerable to hurricanes and flooding, and because everything costs more than it used to.⁸ When growing populations, inflation, and increasing GDP are taken into account, rising disaster costs are fully explained. There's no global warming signal to be found.

Pielke cited data from the Red Cross, the insurance industry, a Brussels research center, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and papers published by other academics. He and his research colleagues weren't alone in their conclusions. As he would say many times over the years, there's 'a broad consensus in the scientific literature' that evidence for 'increasing frequency or intensity of disasters from human (or natural) climate change is incredibly weak'.⁹

On that Washington DC evening, he boldly declared that using natural disasters to justify climate action 'is both scientifically and morally insupportable'. His speech called out prominent individuals, including some scientists, for hyping the climate cause in this manner. Doing so, he said, detracts from 'serious efforts to prepare for disasters'.

Because upgrading building codes, improving drainage, and strengthening evacuation capacity all save lives, Pielke said such measures should be funded.¹⁰ But curbing carbon dioxide would provide no discernable benefit to impoverished populations the next time a hurricane hit. In his words, 'Prescribing emissions reductions to forestall the future effects of disasters is like telling someone who is sedentary, obese, and alcoholic that the best way to improve his health is to wear a seat belt'.

Evidence-based decision-making requires careful examination of the available data, followed by truthful reporting of the results. But by 2006, the drama associated with natural disasters had

become a key component of climate change messaging. Activists, both naïve and sophisticated, proved incapable of incorporating Pielke's moderately unorthodox findings into their worldview. Nine weeks after he delivered the Revelle lecture, Al Gore's best-selling book, *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It*, was released, along with the associated Oscar-winning documentary film. A young readers' edition declares, in the introduction: 'the Earth's climate is changing...Because of it, we are witnessing such awful results as Hurricane Katrina...that leave so many people homeless and cities devastated'.¹¹

When Gore was awarded half of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize the following year, he used his Nobel lecture to link human greenhouse gas emissions to massive droughts, unprecedented wildfires, stronger storms, extensive flooding, and extreme temperatures. His speech encouraged all of humanity to believe that emissions reduction was a sensible way to prevent disaster-related deaths.¹²

Since Gore was a career politician affiliated with the US Democratic Party, it isn't surprising that partisans of that party adopted his version of reality. Over the years, a disproportionate share of the attacks against Pielke came from the Center for American Progress (CAP). This Washington think tank claims to be non-partisan, but is actually a Democratic Party powerhouse. Its founder, John Podesta, was President Bill Clinton's chief of staff, oversaw climate change and energy policy during President Barack Obama's tenure, and then ran Hilary Clinton's failed 2016 election campaign.¹³

CAP launched *Climate Progress*, a now-defunct but highly influential blog, in August 2006.¹⁴ In its earliest years, it was written almost exclusively by Joseph Romm, who'd pursued a policy career after earning a physics oceanography doctorate in 1987. When Bill Clinton became president in 1993, the 33-year-old Romm landed a job with the US Department of Energy. For five years, he helped its Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy disperse an annual budget of \$1 billion to third parties developing non-traditional energy technologies.¹⁵

Hell and High Water, Romm's first book about global warming, hit bookstores a few months after the launch of the *Climate Progress* blog. In the introduction, he confidently declared: 'The science is crystal clear: We humans are the primary cause of global warming...'¹⁶ But a major IPCC report released shortly afterwards disagreed. In the judgment of those experts, 'Most of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century is *very likely* due' to human-generated greenhouse gases (*italics added*).¹⁷ Had crystal clear science existed, the IPCC would have pointed to it.

From the first days of the blog, Romm insisted climate change was making natural disasters worse. The previous year's Hurricane Katrina was, he said, merely a preview of 'what is to come for this country from global warming'.¹⁸ (In the decade that followed, hur-

ricane frequency dropped to historic lows.)¹⁹ Romm said US wildfires had been enhanced by global warming, and that the 21st century would be one of drought.²⁰ The blog predictably painted Republican politicians as buffoons, and Democratic politicians as well informed. According to Romm, anyone who considered Al Gore a climate hypocrite was relying on 'inaccurate information', and should instead read a statement crafted by Gore's communications director.²¹

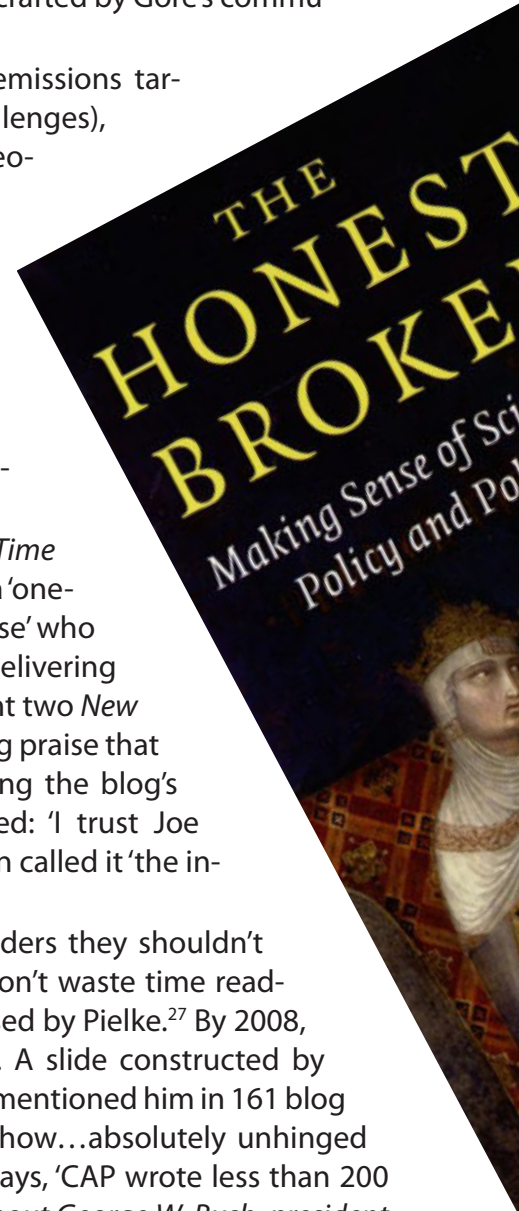
On a range of climate issues, (emissions targets, carbon taxes, technological challenges), Romm ferociously denounced people whose opinions conflict with his own, dubbing them 'global warming Deniers and Delayers.'²² He routinely declared alternative views 'debunked', when they'd merely been disputed. Wanting to talk about bias and groupthink was, in his estimation, 'a wholly unjustified smear on climate scientists.'²³

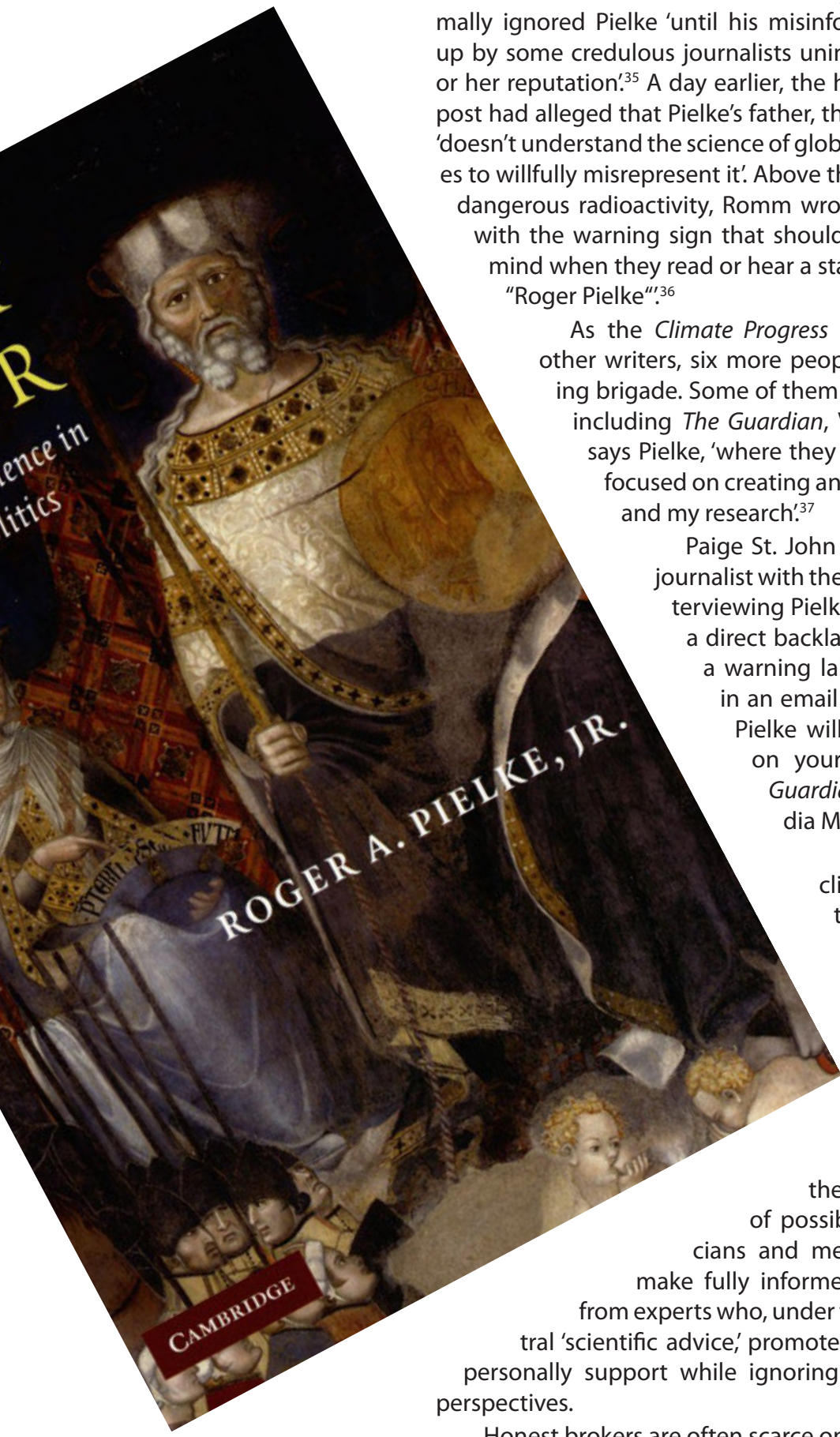
None of the above prevented *Time* magazine from describing Romm as a 'one-man anti-disinformation clearinghouse' who was challenging bad science and delivering the straight goods.²⁴ Nor did it prevent two *New York Times* columnists from dispensing praise that was then prominently displayed along the blog's right margin. Paul Krugman declared: 'I trust Joe Romm on climate.'²⁵ Thomas Friedman called it 'the indispensable blog.'²⁶

In late 2007, Romm told his readers they shouldn't bother reading a book he himself 'won't waste time reading', since that book had been endorsed by Pielke.²⁷ By 2008, Pielke was a frequent Romm target. A slide constructed by Pielke indicates that *Climate Progress* mentioned him in 161 blog posts over eight years. 'To illustrate how...absolutely unhinged their campaign was against me', he says, 'CAP wrote less than 200 articles over the same time period *about George W. Bush, president of the United States*' (original italics).²⁸

On various occasions, Romm called Pielke a 'head cheerleader' for climate chaos,²⁹ a climate change 'denier',³⁰ 'the uber-denier', and a spreader of disinformation.³¹ He declared that 'every single thing Roger Pielke Jr. writes is a joke.'³² In one instance, he called him 'the most debunked person in the science blogosphere...He's like a clock that knows what time it is and then shows the wrong time just to get attention.'³³ In another: 'Pielke has one primary mission in his professional career...and that is to shout down any talk of a link between climate change and extreme weather.'³⁴

This sustained assault on Pielke's good name was amplified by Romm's habit of attacking journalists who gave Pielke a platform.





During 2009, a year in which Pielke's slide says *Climate Progress* mentioned him once a week on average, Romm claimed he normally ignored Pielke 'until his misinformation has been picked up by some credulous journalists uninterested in preserving his or her reputation.'³⁵ A day earlier, the headline of another Romm post had alleged that Pielke's father, the career research scientist, 'doesn't understand the science of global warming – or just chooses to willfully misrepresent it'. Above the international symbol for dangerous radioactivity, Romm wrote: 'And again, let me end with the warning sign that should flash in every journalist's mind when they read or hear a statement by anyone named "Roger Pielke".'³⁶

As the *Climate Progress* blog grew to encompass other writers, six more people joined the Pielke-bashing brigade. Some of them 'moved on to new venues, including *The Guardian*, *Vox* and *ClimateTruth.org*,' says Pielke, 'where they continued their campaign focused on creating an evil, cartoon version of me and my research.'³⁷

Paige St. John is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist with the *Los Angeles Times*. After interviewing Pielke in 2015, she experienced a direct backlash. 'You should come with a warning label,' she ruefully observed in an email afterward. 'Quoting Roger Pielke will bring a hail storm down on your work from the *London Guardian*, *Mother Jones* and *Media Matters*.'³⁸

Pielke's travails tell us the climate movement has little room for people who are sticklers about facts versus fiction. His 2007 book, *The Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science in Policy and Politics*, explains that an honest broker presents the full picture, the pros and cons of a range of possible options, so that politicians and members of the public can make fully informed choices. This is distinct from experts who, under the guise of providing neutral 'scientific advice,' promote the course of action they personally support while ignoring or dismissing alternative perspectives.

Honest brokers are often scarce on the ground. Pielke tells us about scientists who, after publishing climate research in promi-

nent journals, later admitted their primary purpose had been to influence political debate. After it became known Pielke was one of ten people invited to brief senators, congressional staffers, and a cabinet secretary, he says, 'several colleagues contacted me to suggest that I should downplay a core finding of my research'. Honesty wasn't necessarily the best policy, he was advised, since it might lead to the 'wrong' political decisions. Pielke also recalls being asked by the editor of a leading scientific journal 'to dampen the message of an article of mine...for fear that it would be seized upon' by people supporting policies with which the editor apparently disagreed.³⁹

Pielke has testified on numerous occasions before legislative bodies. In 2013, he appeared before a US Senate committee on the environment. Explaining that he had, during the previous 20 years, 'collaborated with researchers around the world to publish dozens of peer-reviewed papers...related to extreme events', his ten-page written statement restated his longstanding position: 'It is misleading, and just plain incorrect, to...associate the increasing costs of disasters with the emission of greenhouse gases'.⁴⁰

Pielke was careful to say that a 'considerable body of research' *expects* extreme events to become more intense and more frequent in the future. (Such research rests on computer modeling, whose long-term accuracy remains unknown.) Pielke further stated that none of his remarks mean that 'human-caused climate change is not real or of concern'. This was just another occasion in which he valiantly attempted to educate politicians about what we know versus what we think might happen some day.

When testifying before the same committee months later, John Holdren, a physics PhD serving as President Obama's science advisor, was asked about Pielke's remarks. He dismissed them as being 'not representative of mainstream views on this topic in the climate-science community'. The implication was that the internationally recognized historical datasets and IPCC reports cited by Pielke were somehow marginal. Pielke disputed this in an email to Holdren, who responded by authoring a six-page response to Pielke's position on droughts.⁴¹ That response was posted on the White House website.

On page one, Holdren admits making comments to journalists 'linking recent severe droughts in the American West to global climate change'. On page two, he appears to contradict himself: 'I have always been careful to note that, scientifically, we cannot say that climate change caused a particular drought, but only that it is *expected* to increase the frequency, intensity, and duration of drought in some regions – and that such changes *are being observed*' (underscore in the original, italics added).

Holdren accused Pielke of leaving out a 'crucial adjacent sentence' in his written statement. In fact, Pielke had included it in a footnote. This false allegation was never retracted. It remained on the White House website for nearly three years, until a new president was sworn in.⁴² Pielke had quoted a 2008 US government re-

port that said 'droughts have, *for the most part*, become shorter, less frequent and cover a smaller portion of the US over the last century' (italics added).⁴³ Immediately following this, the report acknowledged exceptions in the 'US Southwest and parts of the interior of the West'. Pielke duly reported these exceptions in footnote #21, in the section in which he discussed drought in detail.⁴⁴

If one goes to the trouble of unearthing the full paragraph in the government report from which these sentences were plucked, the message is unambiguous. Despite an apparent rising trend in some parts of the US:

- The 'most widespread and severe' droughts occurred in the 1930s and 1950s.
- There's no clear severity trend in one direction or another, when averaged across the entire US.
- US droughts 'have, for the most part', become shorter, less frequent and smaller since 1925.
- Whether one examines drought only in the US or in North America as a whole, 'no overall trend' is found.

Rather than identifying flaws in Pielke's data-heavy analysis, Holdren merely showed him to be out of step with climate groupthink. Citing *projected* increases in drought, ways in which climate change *can* affect droughts, what climate researchers *expect* to happen, and what they think *may* 'already be happening', Holdren's six pages splendidly demonstrate the degree to which people with PhDs have come to think their own *beliefs* about the future outrank actual evidence. From animal entrails to computer modelling, priesthoods have long claimed unique insight.⁴⁵

Joe Romm's commentary on this occasion was illuminating. As if political connections and remarkable scientific acumen are one and the same, he absurdly called political appointee Holdren 'the nation's top scientist'. Romm didn't tell his readers Holdren had falsely accused Pielke of suppressing a relevant caveat. Instead, he excoriated Pielke for 'burying' in a footnote the sentence Holdren had claimed wasn't there at all. The message could not have been plainer: whatever had actually happened, Pielke would always be wrong, his critics would always be right. Romm gloated that Pielke had been 'schooled'. In his words: 'It should be obvious that if you've garnered a 6-page debunking by the nation's top scientist, then you've moved into the elite ranks of climate confusionists.'⁴⁶

Any academic whose research findings conflict with the dominant, mainstream narrative must choose between keeping quiet and going public. In his book, *The Rightful Place of Science: Disasters and Climate Change*, Pielke says, 'at some point in my career I decided on topics where I have expertise, I have an obligation to participate in public debates'. He felt a need to set the record straight, he says, after noticing that the White House website was telling people floods and droughts had become more common:

Actually, the scientific assessment which the White House produced and then relied on to make these claims says that they

have not...for me such misrepresentations have gone too far in an area where I have some considerable expertise...

This stance has ultimately led me to being systematically attacked any time I make a public statement about climate change, in effect railroading me out of the climate debate as an unwelcome voice.⁴⁷

In early 2014, Pielke became a writer for *FiveThirtyEight.com*, an online publication specializing in data-driven journalism, led by Nate Silver. It was mutually agreed that Pielke's first article should discuss natural disasters, including the fact that recently-published IPCC reports reflected Pielke's perspective on these matters.

Entitled 'Disasters cost more than ever – but not because of climate change', it appeared eight years almost to the day after Pielke delivered the 2006 Revelle lecture at the Smithsonian. There was nothing groundbreaking about it.⁴⁸ Yet a firestorm ensued. In Pielke's words:

The online magazine *Salon* explained that I was 'the target of a furious campaign of criticism'...

Slate called for me to be fired and labeled me a 'climate change denier.' Paul Krugman...labeled me a 'known irresponsible skeptic.' The American Geophysical Union, one of the nation's leading scientific associations, published a blog post recommending that Nate Silver should 'find an expert on the subject who has many published papers in the top scientific journals (and there are plenty out there), but instead he chose Roger Pielke.'

These critics were creating their own reality in order to engage in outright character assassination.⁴⁹

The outrage mob won. Soon afterwards, Pielke and *FiveThirtyEight* parted ways. He reports that 'a few of my pieces on sports' were published there before Silver 'refused to publish anything further'.⁵⁰ A third-party website, *ForecastTheFacts.org* – which later changed its name to *ClimateTruth.org* and then to *OilChangeUSA.org* – used this as an opportunity to fundraise. It ran an ad, proclaiming: 'Thanks to our efforts, climate confusionist Roger Pielke, Jr. has stepped down from his role at FiveThirtyEight! Help us win more victories for climate truth by pitching in \$10 today'.⁵¹

When Wikileaks made public thousands of emails connected to Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign in late 2016, a 2014 message addressed to billionaire climate activist Tom Steyer surfaced.⁵² Authored by an employee of the Center for American Progress, the email took credit for getting Pielke fired. Falsely claiming that 'Pielke basically has made a career of "accepting" climate change but disputing that we can really do anything about it or that it has much of an impact', the email says 'ClimateProgress published a comprehensive debunk, with quotes from many prominent cli-



mate scientists' within hours of Pielke's first *FiveThirtyEight* article.

Climate Progress' 900-word response included negative comments by four people, none of whom have apparent expertise in the kind of analysis Pielke performs.⁵³ Michael Mann, Kevin Trenberth, and Jennifer Francis are atmospheric scientists, while John Abraham is a professor of thermal science in St Thomas University's school of engineering⁵⁴ – the *Climate Progress* article says he's 'famous for his formation of the Climate Science Rapid Response Team', an organisation that steers journalists toward a narrow range of climate perspectives.⁵⁵ Four professors from other disciplines. Making comments of questionable merit. About an environmental studies professor's area of specialty. This was *Climate Progress'* idea of a comprehensive debunking.⁵⁶

The email to Steyer continued: 'I think it's fair to say that, without Climate Progress, Pielke would still be writing on climate change for 538. He would be *providing important cover for climate deniers* backed by Silver's very respected brand. But because of our work, he is not...Thanks for your support of this work' (italics added).⁵⁷

In early 2015, the Senate testimony Holdren had disputed became an excuse to subject Pielke to a punitive investigation. Raúl Grijalva, a Democratic congressman from Arizona, targeted seven academics who'd previously made remarks to US legislative committees that climate advocates apparently deemed inconvenient.⁵⁸ Grijalva cited a *New York Times* hit piece alleging improper disclosure of research funding on the part of astrophysicist and climate skeptic Willie Soon.⁵⁹ After observing that Exxon Mobil 'may have provided false or misleading information', to a committee, Grijalva declared: 'If true, these may not be isolated incidents.'

Pure speculation. Wholly unsupported conjecture. On that basis, Grijalva wrote letters to the presidents of the universities in which the seven academics were employed, demanding comprehensive records extending back eight years. One of those letters was sent to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It concerned the esteemed meteorologist Richard Lindzen who'd retired two years earlier. Another, addressed to the University of Colorado, declared that John Holdren 'has highlighted what he believes were serious misstatements by Prof. Pielke of the scientific consensus on climate change'.⁶⁰

Grijalva demanded CU provide Pielke's 'total annual compensation' between 2007 and 2015, all *drafts* of 'Prof. Pielke's testimony before any government body or agency', emails Pielke wrote while composing his testimony, plus a long list of detailed financial information concerning research grants, consulting fees, speaking fees, 'promotional considerations', and travel expenses, together with all emails connected to any funding source.

Keith Seitter, executive director of the American Meteorological Society, immediately protested. 'Publicly singling out specific researchers based on perspectives they have expressed and implying a failure to appropriately disclose funding sources – and

thereby questioning their scientific integrity – sends a chilling message to all academic researchers,’ he said in a letter to Grijalva that he also copied to the seven university presidents.⁶¹

In a blog post titled ‘I am Under “Investigation”’, Pielke declared ‘Congressman Grijalva doesn’t have any evidence of any wrongdoing on my part, either ethical or legal, because there is none. He simply disagrees with the substance of my testimony’. In Pielke’s view, this was a witch-hunt ‘designed to intimidate’ him. ‘I have no funding, declared or undeclared, with any fossil fuel company or interest. I never have. Representative Grijalva knows this too, because when I have testified before the US Congress, I have disclosed my funding and possible conflicts of interest.’⁶²

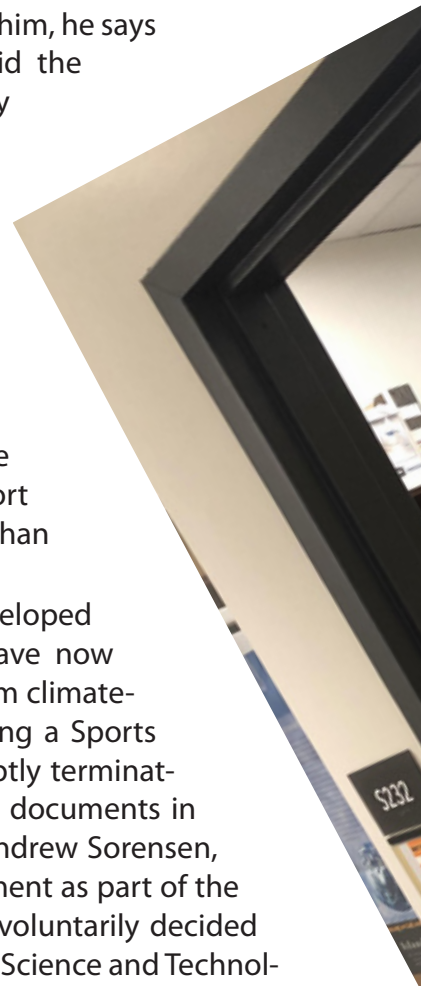
Pielke then dropped a minor bombshell: He had, he said, ‘already shifted all of my academic work away from climate issues. I am simply not initiating any new research or papers on the topic’.

In 2018, Pielke delivered his first public talk on climate since the launch of Grijalva’s 2015 fishing expedition. He’d gone, he said, from two or three speaking invitations per month to one in three years. In his words: ‘Delegitimization works.’⁶³

Today, Pielke describes the investigation as career-altering. Responding to it consumed hundreds of hours of his time and involved considerable stress. Support from campus authorities was, he says, non-existent. The only people who assisted him were university lawyers. Rather than standing by him, he says the environmental studies department did the opposite. ‘I felt strong pressure to leave my department and institute’.

Following the Wikileaks revelation, CU’s Board of Regents voted 9–0 to reaffirm its commitment to academic freedom at a meeting held in Denver.⁶⁴ The final wording of the resolution didn’t mention Pielke by name, but was widely understood to be an expression of staunch support, for which he says he remains ‘eternally grateful’. But that support failed to infuse the Boulder campus, less than an hour’s drive away.

All four academic programs Pielke developed and led on campus over two decades have now been shut down.⁶⁵ While taking a break from climate-related topics, he spent 2016–19 developing a Sports Governance Center. He says this was ‘abruptly terminated’ by campus officials, and that extensive documents in his possession prove this to be the case. Andrew Sorensen, a spokesperson for CU, contacted for comment as part of the research for this paper, insists ‘Prof. Pielke voluntarily decided to close the Sports Governance Center’. The Science and Technology Policy Research Center, he adds, ‘was closed after Professor Pielke voluntarily moved on’.



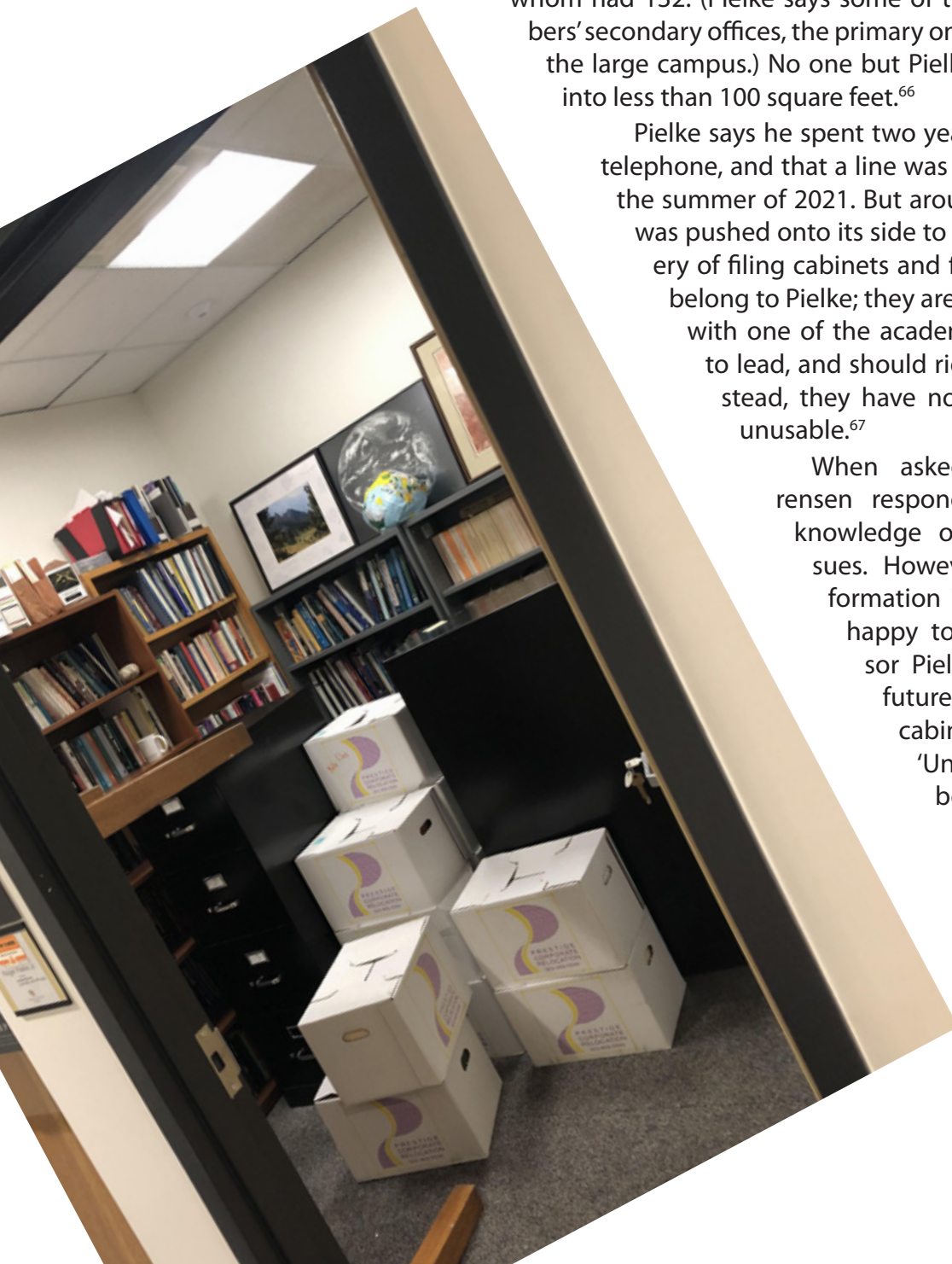
Upon his return to the environmental studies department in August 2019, Pielke's employment situation deteriorated sharply. As the department's first full professor, he is its most senior academic. Nevertheless, he was assigned a windowless, 98-square-foot office, reminiscent of the fictional Harry Potter's cupboard under the stairs. It came with no computer, no telephone line, and no Ethernet connection (Wi-Fi was available).

Spokesperson Sorensen says Pielke's office 'is in a more recently renovated building than many offices across campus,' and that 'there are about 10 offices in the immediate vicinity roughly the same size.' But an internal document ranking the square footage of office space for all 19 environmental studies faculty members, requested and received by Pielke in 2020, clearly indicates that the department's three other full professors each occupied offices slightly larger than 200 square feet. Near the bottom of the list, six people worked in less than 150 square feet, one of whom had 132. (Pielke says some of these are faculty members' secondary offices, the primary ones being elsewhere on the large campus.) No one but Pielke had been squeezed into less than 100 square feet.⁶⁶

Pielke says he spent two years asking for an office telephone, and that a line was finally installed during the summer of 2021. But around that time, his desk was pushed onto its side to make room for a delivery of filing cabinets and file boxes. These didn't belong to Pielke; they are apparently associated with one of the academic programs he used to lead, and should rightly be in storage. Instead, they have now rendered his office unusable.⁶⁷

When asked, spokesperson Sorensen responded: 'We don't have knowledge on phone/ethernet issues. However, our Office of Information Technology would be happy to assist should Professor Pielke have issues in the future.' Concerning the filing cabinets, Sorensen says 'Unwanted furniture can be removed via a simple request to our Facilities Management team'.

The implication is that these bizarre circumstances are Pielke's fault. If this celebrated academic had



only murmured the proper incantations while standing on one foot during a solar eclipse, all would be well. Pielke says most of the rest of the department is fully aware that his office is unusable. It's a running joke, he says, amongst the faculty.

This phenomenon has a name. It's called 'academic mobbing'. As Eve Seguin, a professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal explains, this is a collective form of bullying, a 'concerted process to get rid of an employee'. It includes public humiliation, 'tampering with their workstation', and false accusations, an onslaught that eventually poisons the entire faculty:

Mobbed professors expect their employers to protect and defend them, and experience cognitive dissonance when...no such help is forthcoming. In fact, university administrations and human resources departments are involved in most mobbing campaigns, either actively or passively, by failing to take corrective action. An estimated 12 percent of mobbed professors end up committing suicide.⁶⁸

In a response to questions about Pielke's situation, spokesperson Sorensen, and Candace Smith, the associate vice chancellor of strategic media relations at CU Boulder, expressed neither concern nor sympathy. After consulting others on campus, neither expressed consternation that a senior professor at their institution is being treated in this manner. There was no announcement that immediate steps had been taken to remove the unwanted filing cabinets, and to ensure that Pielke has a desk, a computer, and a proper Internet connection.

Instead, the spokespeople smoothly insist 'CU Boulder is committed to the principles of both academic freedom and free expression. If any faculty member feels that their...opportunity to engage in scholarship has been compromised...there are avenues of redress available through the university's faculty grievance process.'⁶⁹

Pielke's position is that 'My issues are well known among administrators'. He says that after he complained repeatedly about his situation, in 2020 he found himself falsely accused by his department chair of improperly securing a COVID-19 related research grant, was investigated for months, and then found guilty by that same department chair. Only after he appealed to a grievance committee external to his department, he says, was the matter dropped due to an obvious lack of evidence.⁷⁰ University spokespeople declined to comment on this matter, citing privacy concerns. Nor did they respond when asked what institutional policies are in place to address academic mobbing.

During the time this report was being researched and written, Pielke turned 53. Also around that time students, faculty, and staff on his campus were encouraged to register for a Zoom-based panel discussion about academics coping with backlash. An internal announcement explained:

Sometimes being a public scholar can be risky, especially if the scholarship is considered to be 'controversial' or 'political.' Facul-

ty can face backlash against themselves and their work...

*Campus leaders are keen to support our faculty personally and professionally and uphold the tenets of academic freedom. (italics added)*⁷¹

It isn't Pielke's imagination that he's now treated like a non-entity on the campus that has been his academic home since he was recruited back in 2001. Despite enduring more than a decade of severe backlash, he wasn't invited to participate in that panel discussion. He heard about it by accident. One of the people who did participate was CU spokesperson Candace Smith.⁷² When asked by the GWPF how many faculty members other than Pielke have been investigated by a member of Congress, she declined to answer.

Every page of the CU Boulder website bears an inspirational slogan along its bottom margin. In a stout, substantial font the campus community is urged to 'Be Boulder'. Don't be timid, it implies. Step forward and speak your truth.

But no one really means it. The story of Roger Pielke Jr makes this clear.

Notes

1. Michael Roddy (author) and Ian Murphy (illustrator), '15 most heinous climate villains,' *The Beast*, 29 Dec. 2009. <https://tinyurl.com/HeinousClimateVillains>.
2. Roddy is described as a 'climate activist' in 'California dreamin' – "2112" movie in the works,' *The Angry Luddite*, 18 Sept. 2008. <https://tinyurl.com/MichaelRoddy>.
3. Person #1 on the list is turned into fertilizer. #2 is locked in a freezer where he 'either freezes to death' or has his head split open by a 'ten-foot icicle'. #3 is 'Locked in an outhouse and set on fire'. #4 is 'Forced to smoke 100 petroleum-dipped cigarettes...'. #5 suffers a medical crisis due to a brain tumour, but doesn't receive timely medical assistance. #6 is physically and sexually assaulted by a camel. #7 'contracts black lung disease'. #8 is compelled to have sex 'with Ted Nugent for life'. #9 is given cement shoes. #10 is exiled to Mars 'without sufficient tools, food or oxygen'. #11 receives a harp in heaven that only plays a sexually explicit song. #12 is 'Locked in a very hot sauna with a running automobile'. #13 is buried up to his face in the Sahara, and is mistaken for a latrine. #14 is ripped to pieces by hyenas. #15 perishes with a medieval torture device in his anus. <https://tinyurl.com/HeinousClimateVillains>.
4. Roger Pielke, Jr., *The Climate Fix: What Scientists and Politicians Won't Tell You About Global Warming*, Basic Books, 2010, pp. 7 and 11. The mainstream view that global action is needed to minimise human-generated CO₂ can be contrasted with that of atmospheric scientist Richard Lindzen, who says human-produced CO₂ is no cause for alarm. See Richard Lindzen, *Global Warming and the Irrelevance of Science*, The Global Warming Policy Foundation, 2016. <https://tinyurl.com/Lindzen2016>. Freeman Dyson, the late theoretical physicist, argued that decades of US government research funding has biased scientific thought by focussing solely on the dangers of human-produced CO₂ while ignoring the benefits. See Dyson's foreword in Indur M. Goklany, *Carbon Dioxide: The Good News*, The Global Warming Policy Foundation, 2015, pp. vii–ix. <https://tinyurl.com/GoodNews2015>.
5. Mitch Bendis, 'Roger Pielke Jr's first appearance in years,' *Minnesota Republic*, 27 Apr. 2018. <https://tinyurl.com/Bendis2018>. See also Pielke's slide deck from that occasion, 'Extreme weather and extreme politics,' 18 Apr. 2018, p. 2. <https://tinyurl.com/Pielke-UofMN-2018>.
6. Roger Pielke, Jr., *Curriculum Vitae*, October 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/PielkeCV-Oct2020>.
7. Roger Pielke Jr., 'Disasters, death, and destruction: Accounting for recent calamities,' *Seventh Annual Roger Revelle Commemorative Lecture*, 15 Mar. 2006. <https://tinyurl.com/PielkeRevelleLecture>.
8. On p. 161 of *The Climate Fix*, Pielke notes that 'hurricanes and floods...are responsible for the vast majority of property damage related to weather events around the world'. In *The Rightful Place of Science*, he writes: 'Extreme temperatures and precipitation are not big drivers of [financial] disaster losses...Even though there have been increases in what scientists call "extreme precipitation" there is very little evidence to suggest that these increases have been accompanied by increasing floods...US hurricanes are responsible for almost 70% of the overall increases in disaster losses since 1980 in the Munich Re global loss dataset', pp. 57, 59–60.
9. Roger Pielke, Jr., *The Rightful Place of Science: Disasters and Climate Change*, 2nd edition, Consortium for Science, Policy & Outcomes, 2018, p. 6.
10. On p. 189 of *The Climate Fix*, Pielke quotes an expert who says: 'The standard mantra is earthquakes don't kill people, buildings do.' Ergo, while earthquakes themselves can't be prevented, building codes strongly influence the number of lives lost.
11. Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth: The Crisis of Global Warming*, Viking Young Readers Group, 2007, p. 11. The full quote reads: 'Science has now proven beyond a doubt that the Earth's climate is changing, and changing much faster than originally feared. Because of it, we are witnessing such awful results as Hurricane Katrina in 2005 – results that leave so many people homeless and cities devastated.'

12. Al Gore, *Nobel Lecture*, 10 Dec. 2007. <https://tinyurl.com/AlGoreNobelLecture>.
13. John Podesta biography, Georgetown Law School, <https://tinyurl.com/JohnPodestaBio>. And 'John Podesta, former presidential chief of staff and counselor, to visit campus,' *Yale News*, 10 Apr. 2018. <https://tinyurl.com/JohnPodestaYale>.
14. Joseph Romm, 'A blog is born,' *ClimateProgress.org*, 5 Aug. 2006. <https://tinyurl.com/ClimateProgressBlogBorn>.
15. The blog post cited immediately above advises consulting Romm's Wikipedia page. The biographical info included in this report is from the 15 Oct. 2009 backup of that page at *Archive.org*. <https://tinyurl.com/RommWikipedia2009>.
16. Joseph Romm, *Hell and High Water: Global Warming - the Solution and the Politics – and What We Should Do*, William Morrow, 2006, p. 2. The full quote reads: 'We humans are the primary cause of global warming, and we face a bleak future if we fail to act quickly.'
17. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Summary for Policymakers*, Climate Change 2007: Working Group I: The Physical Science Basis. <https://tinyurl.com/2007-IPCC-most>.
18. Joseph Romm, '100 Katrinas and the launch of Climate Progress,' *ClimateProgress.org*, 29 Aug. 2006. <https://tinyurl.com/100Katrinas>.
19. Roger Pielke, Jr., 'Weather-related natural disasters: Should we be concerned about a reversion to the mean?' *Risk Frontiers*, July 2017. <https://tinyurl.com/PielkeHurricanes2017>.
20. Joseph Romm, 'Global Warming – Bush gets Fired,' *ClimateProgress.org*, 9 Nov. 2006 and Joseph Romm, 'A US-China Race with No Winners,' *ClimateProgress.org*, 6 Nov. 2006. <https://tinyurl.com/Romm-fires-drought>.
21. Joseph Romm, 'People who live in greenhouses,' *ClimateProgress.org*, 19 Aug. 2006. <https://tinyurl.com/Romm-Al-Gore>.
22. Joseph Romm, 'People who live in greenhouses,' *ClimateProgress.org*, 19 Aug. 2006. <https://tinyurl.com/Romm-Al-Gore>.
23. Joseph Romm, 'Memo to Washington Post: Please stop profiling global warming deniers,' *ClimateProgress.org*, 18 Sept. 2006. <https://tinyurl.com/Romm-grouphthink>.
24. Eric Roston, 'Climate Progress,' *Time*, 17 Apr. 2008. <https://tinyurl.com/Roston2008>.
25. Paul Krugman, 'A counterintuitive train wreck,' *New York Times*, 16 Oct. 2009. <https://tinyurl.com/Krugman-Romm>.
26. Thomas L. Friedman, 'The inflection is near?' *New York Times*, 7 Mar. 2009. <https://tinyurl.com/Friedman-Romm>.
27. Joseph Romm, 'The death of "The Death of Environmentalism"', *Grist.org*, 3 Oct. 2007. <https://tinyurl.com/wont-waste-time>.
28. Roger Pielke, Jr., 'Wikileaks and me,' *RogerPielkeJr.com*, 14 Nov. 2016. <https://tinyurl.com/wikileaks-me>.
29. Joseph Romm, 'How I learned to stop worrying and love the blogosphere,' *ClimateProgress.org*, 3 July 2009. <https://tinyurl.com/chaos-cheerleader>.
30. Joseph Romm, 'Why does the New York Times hate science? Why do deniers like Pielke shout down any talk of a link between climate change and extreme weather?' *ClimateProgress.org*, 22 Jun. 2009. <https://tinyurl.com/Romm-deniers>.
31. Joseph Romm, 'DeLong and Deltoid: "The thing about a Roger Pielke Jr. train wreck is that you just can't look away"', *ClimateProgress.org*, 24 Oct. 2009. <https://tinyurl.com/uber-Romm>.
32. Joseph Romm, 'Well-known climate analyst, author of *The Honest Broker* urges people "Please read Climate Progress"', *ClimateProgress.org*, 7 Aug. 2009. <https://tinyurl.com/joke-Romm>.
33. Joseph Romm, 'DeLong and Deltoid: "The thing about a Roger Pielke Jr. train wreck is that you just can't look away"', *ClimateProgress.org*, 24 Oct. 2009. <https://tinyurl.com/uber-Romm>.

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35. Joseph Romm, 'How I learned to stop worrying and love the blogosphere,' *ClimateProgress.org*, 3 July 2009. <https://tinyurl.com/chaos-cheerleader>.
36. Joseph Romm, 'Like father, like son: Roger Peilke Sr. also doesn't understand the science of global warming - or just chooses to willfully misrepresent it,' *ClimateProgress.org*, 2 July 2009. <https://tinyurl.com/Romm-radioactive>.
37. Roger Pielke, Jr., 'Wikileaks and Me,' *RogerPielkeJr.com*, 14 Nov. 2016. <https://tinyurl.com/wikileaks-me>.
38. Roger Pielke, Jr., 'Extreme Weather and Extreme Politics,' 18 Apr. 2018, p. 22. <https://tinyurl.com/Pielke-UofMN-2018>.
39. Roger Pielke, Jr., *The Climate Fix*, Basic Books, 2010, pp. 57-58, 125, 203-205. On pages 192–195, Pielke further discusses the Climategate emails that leaked into the public domain in 2009. They indicate, he says, that certain scientists made 'concerted efforts to reshape the peer review process...by putting pressure on journal editors and editorial boards, by seeking to stack editorial boards with like-minded colleagues, by arranging boycotts of journals, and through other unprofessional actions.' The emails reveal, he says, 'activist scientists busy extolling the virtues of peer review to journalists and the public, while at the same time they were busy behind the scenes plotting to corrupt the peer-review process...'
40. Roger Pielke, Jr., *Statement of Dr. Roger Pielke, Jr. to the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the United States Senate*, 18 July 2013. <https://tinyurl.com/Pielke-Senate2013>.
41. John Holdren, *Drought and Global Climate Change: An Analysis of Statements by Roger Pielke Jr.*, 28 Feb. 2014. <https://tinyurl.com/Holdren-Pielke>.
42. *Archive.org* indicates the document remained on the White House website until at least November 2016. When the next *Archive.org* snapshot was taken (on 20 January 2017, the day Donald Trump was sworn in as US president), it was gone. <https://tinyurl.com/white-house-web>. Holdren's six-pager still lives on in the online Obama White House archives (and for all time to come): https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/critique_of_pielke_jr_statements_on_drought.pdf.
43. Thomas Karl et al., *Weather and Climate Extremes in a Changing Climate*, US Climate Change Science Program, June 2008. p. 42 (p. 56 of the PDF). <https://tinyurl.com/2008-drought>.
44. Roger Pielke, Jr., *Statement of Dr. Roger Pielke, Jr. to the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the United States Senate*, 18 July 2013. <https://tinyurl.com/Pielke-Senate2013>. Pielke's 'Take-Home Points,' on the first page of his statement, summarize his arguments. Footnote #2 provides the source of the 'for the most part,' but doesn't include the sentence that immediately follows. That appears in footnote #21, on page 9.
45. Quoting from several scientific papers he feels support his position, Holdren references *projections* six times and *expected* developments thrice. We're told some events are *foreshadowed* and *presaged*, some *appear* to be underway, some are *suggested*, and some are *probable*. Still others *may* or *could* happen.
46. Joseph Romm, 'Obama science advisor John Holdren schools political scientist Roger Pielke on climate and drought,' *ThinkProgress.org*, 3 Mar. 2014. <https://tinyurl.com/Romm-Holdren>.
47. Roger Pielke, Jr., *The Rightful Place of Science: Disasters and Climate Change*, 2nd edition, Consortium for Science, Policy & Outcomes, 2018, p. 3.
48. Roger Pielke, Jr., 'Disasters cost more than ever – but not because of climate change,' *FiveThirtyEight.com*, 19 Mar. 2014. <https://tinyurl.com/Pielke-538>.
49. Roger Pielke, Jr., *The Rightful Place of Science: Disasters and Climate Change*, 2nd edition, Consortium for Science, Policy & Outcomes, 2018, p. 20.

50. Roger Pielke, Jr., *The Rightful Place of Science: Disasters and Climate Change*, 2nd edition, Consortium for Science, Policy & Outcomes, 2018, p. 20.
51. Roger Pielke, Jr., 'Extreme weather and extreme politics,' 18 Apr. 2018, pp. 37-38. <https://tinyurl.com/Pielke-UofMN-2018>.
52. Judd Legum, 'Climate Progress in action,' email to Tom Steyer, 28 July 2014. <https://tinyurl.com/Pielke-fired>.
53. Emily Atkin, 'First climate article on Nate Silver's data website uses "deeply misleading" data, top climatologists say,' *ThinkProgress.org*, 19 Mar. 2014. <https://tinyurl.com/538-CAP>.
54. John Abraham biography page, School of Engineering, University of St. Thomas. <https://tinyurl.com/JohnAbraham-bio>.
55. ClimateRapidResponse.org, <https://tinyurl.com/ClimateRapidResponse>.
56. Emily Atkin, 'First climate article on Nate Silver's data website uses "deeply misleading" data, top climatologists say,' *ThinkProgress.org*, 19 Mar. 2014. <https://tinyurl.com/538-CAP>.
57. Judd Legum, 'Climate Progress in action,' email to Tom Steyer, 28 July 2014. <https://tinyurl.com/Pielke-fired>.
58. John Schwartz, 'Lawmakers seek information on funding for climate change critics,' *New York Times*, 25 Feb. 2015. <https://tinyurl.com/Gillis-2015>. Rich Lowry, 'A shameful climate witch hunt,' *RealClearPolitics.com*, 28 Feb. 2015. <https://tinyurl.com/Lowry2015>.
59. Justin Gillis and John Schwartz, 'Deeper ties to corporate cash for doubtful climate researcher,' *New York Times*, 21 Feb. 2015. This article, which claimed to be exposing hidden conflicts-of-interest, portrayed pressure group Greenpeace as a reputable source of information rather than an entity with an obvious axe to grind: <https://archive.md/tjQHy>. It states: 'Dr. Soon is not an astrophysicist... Yet on Harvard University's website he is clearly identified as a 'Physicist/Astrophysicist' with the Center for Astrophysics, <https://tinyurl.com/WillieSoon-bio>. For an alternative perspective on Soon's funding, see Jim Lakely and James M. Taylor, 'Witch-hunt 2015,' *Green Watch*, Capital Research Center, April 2015. <https://tinyurl.com/witch-hunt-2015>.
60. Raúl M. Grijalva, letter to Bruce D. Benson, President, University of Colorado, 24 Feb. 2015. <https://tinyurl.com/Grijalva-Pielke>.
61. Keith L. Seitter, letter to Raúl M. Grijalva, US House of Representatives, 27 Feb. 2015. <https://tinyurl.com/Seitter2015>.
62. Roger Pielke, Jr., 'I am under "investigation"', *TheClimateFix.wordpress.com*, 25 Feb. 2015. <https://tinyurl.com/Pielke-Grijalva>.
63. Roger Pielke, Jr., 'Pielke on climate #10,' *TheClimateFix.wordpress.com*, 1 May 2018. <https://tinyurl.com/Pielke2018>.
64. Sarah Kuta, 'CU board shows support for faculty, students' academic freedom,' *Daily Camera*, 10 Nov. 2016. <https://tinyurl.com/Kuta2016>.
65. The Center for Science and Technology Policy Research, the Graduate Certificate in Science and Technology Policy, the Environmental Studies graduate policy program, and the Sports Governance Center.
66. Environmental studies department, University of Colorado Boulder, floor space by square feet, per faculty member. Requested by Roger Pielke, Jr. April 2020, received June 2020 <https://tinyurl.com/envs-floor-space>.
67. Photograph of Pielke's office, supplied to the Global Warming Policy Foundation 17 Oct. 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/Pielke-office>.
68. Eve Seguin, 'Academic mobbing, or how to become campus tormentors,' *University Affairs*, 19 Sept. 2016. <https://tinyurl.com/EveSeguin2016>. Attempts to locate the source of the estimated 12% suicide rate prior to publication of this report were unsuccessful.
69. The full quote provided by CU Boulder media relations reads: 'We are not aware of any effort to deny Professor Roger Pielke, Jr. access to resources. CU Boulder is committed to the principles

of both academic freedom and free expression. If any faculty member feels that their scholarship or opportunity to engage in scholarship has been compromised by any administrator or colleague, there are avenues of redress available through the university's faculty grievance process'.

70. Pielke notes that the awarded grant has since been implemented as a successful research project entitled 'Evaluation of science advice in a pandemic emergency.' <https://escapecovid19.org/>.

71. 'Nov. 4 panel to explore backlash against public scholars: Academic freedom, safety, support', *CU Boulder Today*, 27 Oct. 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/backlash2021>.

72. Smith was listed as a speaker, although Pielke has not been able to confirm that she attended on the day, or even that the event went ahead.

About the Global Warming Policy Foundation

The Global Warming Policy Foundation is an all-party and non-party think tank and a registered educational charity which, while openminded on the contested science of global warming, is deeply concerned about the costs and other implications of many of the policies currently being advocated.

Our main focus is to analyse global warming policies and their economic and other implications. Our aim is to provide the most robust and reliable economic analysis and advice. Above all we seek to inform the media, politicians and the public, in a newsworthy way, on the subject in general and on the misinformation to which they are all too frequently being subjected at the present time.

The key to the success of the GWPF is the trust and credibility that we have earned in the eyes of a growing number of policy makers, journalists and the interested public. The GWPF is funded overwhelmingly by voluntary donations from a number of private individuals and charitable trusts. In order to make clear its complete independence, it does not accept gifts from either energy companies or anyone with a significant interest in an energy company.

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