

MEMO

TO: Ronald Bailey, *Reason* magazine

FROM: Francesca T. Grifo, Union of Concerned Scientists

DATE: May 31, 2012

RE: REASON FOUNDATION'S INCLUSION IN A *CLIMATE OF CORPORATE CONTROL*

Thank you for the opportunity to explain the inclusion of the Reason Foundation in the Union of Concerned Scientists' May 2012 report *A Climate of Corporate Control*.

First, I would like to acknowledge the editorial independence of *Reason* magazine from the Reason Foundation. With regard to the Reason Foundation, this report addresses information from corporate foundation tax filings and materials found on the Reason Foundation's website.

Why the Reason Foundation is in Figure 5

The inclusion of the Reason Foundation in Figure 5 of the report reflects payments from the General Electric Foundation to the Reason Foundation in 2009 and in 2010. Each payment is documented in the General Electric Company's Internal Revenue Service Form 990, publically available [here](#) and [here](#).

We did not have a threshold dollar amount for funds. The Form 990 does not provide further information on the nature of these payments or any others documented in this figure; therefore, we treated all payments equally and carefully cited the sources of this information. In addition, we clearly acknowledged on page 11 of the report that because the details of these affiliations are not publicly available, we cannot directly link specific donations to climate-related activities. With greater transparency measures in place for corporate giving, we could have determined and reported the specific nature of those gifts.

How We Determined the Reason Foundation Misrepresents Science

Our analysis is based on climate-related materials associated with the groups we assessed, including the Reason Foundation (again, not the editorially-independent *Reason* magazine). As noted in the methodology as described in Appendix A (page 53) of the report, our criteria for identifying misrepresentations of the science was as follows:

To identify companies, think tanks, and other organizations that misrepresented climate science in their statements or actions, we examined materials associated with their names and looked for statements therein about climate change that misrepresented the scientific consensus on climate change. These misrepresentations included any of the following (adapted from Brown 2012):

- *Emphasizing the unknowns about how human actions may affect the climate system while ignoring what is known*
- *Repeating untruthful claims about climate change science*

- *Manufacturing bogus scientific claims by such strategies as organizing dubious scientific conferences and paying for scientists to produce criticisms of mainstream climate science*
- *Widely publishing climate-science claims that have not been subjected to peer review*

Companies and outside organizations with statements affiliated with their name that had any of the above four characteristics were considered, for the purposes of this report, to be misrepresenting climate science.

For the Reason Foundation, this assessment was based on the contents of the climate change section of the foundation's website, available at reason.org/areas/topic/climate-change. Due to its choice of which scientific research to feature (and not feature), and the context in which this information is discussed, the foundation's treatment of climate science was found to be misrepresentative of the scientific consensus. Many of the posts on reason.org focus exclusively on studies and information that emphasized the uncertainty associated with climate science, while neglecting to place this information in context of what is known about that science.

For example, the blog post entitled, "[Global Warming...Cooling...Or Just Climate Change?](#)" does not accurately represent the research that it purports to summarize. The post claims to highlight new data from the UK Met Office (a news release for which is [here](#)); however, the post fails to provide a link to this release or the original study. Instead, the post provides a link to a [Daily Mail article](#) that purports to summarize the findings.

Even a quick comparison of the original news release from the Met Office with the Daily Mail article demonstrates that Daily Mail misinterpreted the research results. The article's subtitle reads, "Met Office releases new figures which show no warming in 15 years," but the Met Office's news release states the following:

"2012 is expected to be around 0.48 °C warmer than the long-term (1961-1990) global average of 14.0 °C, with a predicted likely range of between 0.34 °C and 0.62 °C, according to the Met Office annual global temperature forecast ... The middle of this range would place 2012 within the top 10 warmest years in a series which goes back to 1850."

This discrepancy between the two accounts is further underscored by a subsequent statement from the UK Met Office, declaring that the Daily Mail article "includes numerous errors in the reporting of published peer reviewed science undertaken by the Met Office Hadley Centre" and for its author "to suggest that the latest global temperatures available show no warming in the last 15 years is entirely misleading." The Met Office also rightly pointed out that taking a longer, scientifically defensible time frame shows significant warming over the past several decades.

Despite this obvious misrepresentation of the data and further confirmation from the authors of the peer-reviewed study, we find no correction on the site to educate readers of this error. If the Reason Foundation's intention with this post was to educate on the findings of this new study, we see no reason

why the foundation would not have directly linked to the Met Office's summary of the study results rather than a news article that misinterprets these data.

Further, the post does not accurately reflect what the majority of climate scientists understand about warming trends and how short-term temperature changes should be interpreted. This post implies that because there has not been a detectable warming in temperatures since 1997, long-term temperature trends consistent with climate change are not valid. The post reads: "the Earth is not warming. It hasn't experienced meaningful warming since 1997." In reality, most climate scientists understand that temperature trends over this short of a time period are not statistically significant because at this scale the noise of variability in temperatures is greater than that of any detectable climate signal and thus, climate trends cannot be detected with sufficient accuracy over this short time range.

Other posts on the site show a similar pattern of discussing isolated research findings without presentation of known climate science surrounding this new information. By failing to place these findings in context, readers are misled to believe that scientific understanding of climate change is much less certain than in reality. We find this way of discussing climate change is misrepresentative of the scientific consensus.

We hope this addresses your concerns with the report.