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The climate change hoax

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We are scientists who agree with critics such as Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., that there is a climate change “hoax” being perpetrated on the American people.

We just don’t agree on what the hoax is and who is being fooled.

Sen. Inhofe and his associates want us to believe that the science of climate change is the contrived “hoax.” Their claims cannot withstand even the most cursory scrutiny. Does this “hoax” date back to 1896, when Nobel Laureate Svante Arrhenius presented his findings that human activities releasing carbon dioxide to the atmosphere could change Earth’s climate? Did it start when scientists Charles Keeling and Roger Revelle demonstrated in the 1950s that a large part of the carbon dioxide released from the burning of coal, oil and gas was remaining in the atmosphere because the oceans couldn’t absorb it fast enough? Did an evil cabal of “warmists” trick a science advisory panel into warning President Lyndon Johnson in 1965 of the dangers of adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere?

In 2009, the National Academies of Science of the world’s major industrialized nations (including China, India and Brazil) issued an unprecedented joint statement on the reality of climate change and the need for immediate action. Do those who claim climate change is a hoax expect us to believe this was a put on by an international bunch of con men with doctoral degrees? The U.S. Evangelical Environmental Network tells us that global warming is one of the major challenges of our time, and Pope Benedict XVI has called for coordinated global action to address dangers of climate change - have they too joined the conspiracy?

Of course not.

The real hoax is the claim that a scientific debate exists about the reality of climate change. It is promoted by organizations that benefit from our current energy choices and groups that are opposed to any regulation whatsoever, even the most sensible safeguards that help protect our children’s health.

The hoaxers claim climate scientists are “in it for the money,” a ludicrous proposition as pointed out by Jon Koomey. Dr. Koomey used his expertise in mathematical modeling to study the economic impacts of climate change for two decades at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. If Koomey and his colleagues were in it for the money they would have taken their analytic expertise to Wall Street long ago, where their salaries would have been five to 10 times what they can make working for the government.

The hyped rhetoric around this issue is an attempt to convince Americans that accepting the scientific evidence will require taking actions inimical to our shared values of liberty, freedom, community and entrepreneurship.

But one need look no further than the studies of America’s military and intelligence officials who understand how disruptive human-caused climate change could be to our nation’s interests both at home and abroad (in 2009 the CIA established a Center on Climate Change and National Security). Putting our head in the sand about climate change is a sure way to undermine American liberty, economic prosperity and national security. Of all the alternative paths before us to address this problem, doing nothing to reduce the threat of serious climate change is a dangerous and expensive option.

There’s a climate change hoax all right, but it is Sen. Inhofe and his science-denying associates who are trying to do the fooling. We are all going to pay a price if we don’t call-out their campaign of misinformation and get down to the real work before us. The question now is what will be the cost of inaction to our health and our pocketbooks? The longer the hoaxers can prevent serious action, the higher the price we will all pay.