



## **Science Committee Oversight of NOAA's 2015 Climate Change Study**

### **Background**

In the summer of 2015, NOAA scientists published a study ("the Karl study") that retroactively altered historical climate change data, which resulted in the elimination of a well-known climate phenomenon known as the "climate change hiatus." The hiatus was a period between 1998 and 2013 where the rate of global temperatures growth slowed. This fact has always been a thorn in the side of climate change alarmists, as it became difficult to disprove the slowdown in warming.

The Karl study refuted the hiatus and rewrote climate change history to claim that warming had in fact been occurring. The Committee heard from scientists who raised concerns about the study's methodologies, readiness, and politicization. In response, the Committee conducted oversight and sent NOAA inquiries to investigate the circumstances surrounding the Karl study.

Over the course of the Committee's oversight, NOAA refused to comply with the inquiries, baselessly arguing that Congress is not authorized to request communications from federal scientists. This culminated in the issuance of a congressional subpoena, with which NOAA also failed to comply. During the course of the investigation, the Committee heard from whistleblowers who confirmed that, among other flaws in the study, it was rushed for publication to support President Obama's climate change agenda.

### **Timeline of events:**

**June 4, 2015:** NOAA scientists, led by Mr. Thomas Karl, published a study in *AAA's Science* magazine. The study refutes previous scientific data that there existed a halt of global temperature increase since 1998.

**June 16, 2015:** NOAA scientists briefed the Science Committee on the new NOAA climate change study.

**July 14, 2015:** Science Committee Chairman Lamar Smith sent a letter to NOAA Administrator Kathryn Sullivan seeking documents and communications related to the Karl study and the agency's new determination that there was never a pause in global temperatures.

**August 20, 2015:** NOAA responded to the Science Committee letter by providing technical documents related to the study, but did not provide any communications requested.

**September 10, 2015:** Chairman Smith sent a letter to NOAA Administrator Kathryn Sullivan asking for additional documents and communications related to the study.

**September 25, 2015:** Chairman Smith sent a letter to NOAA Administrator Kathryn Sullivan reiterating the Committee's request for documents and communications. He further informed the Administrator that he would consider the use of compulsory process should the agency continue to obstruct congressional oversight.

**October 2, 2015:** NOAA responded to the Science Committee letter, releasing technical documents related to the study, but failed to provide any communications requested or an explanation for withholding these documents.

**October 13, 2015:** The Science Committee issued a subpoena to Administrator Sullivan requesting documents and communications related to the Karl climate change study.

**October 19, 2015:** NOAA scientists briefed the Science Committee on the new Karl climate change study.

**October 27, 2015:** NOAA responded to the Committee by refusing to comply with the subpoena.

**November 13, 2015:** Chairman Smith sent a letter to Department of Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker directing her to ensure NOAA's lawful compliance with the subpoena.

**November 18, 2015:** Chairman Smith sent a letter to Secretary Pritzker informing her that the Committee had whistleblower information related to the NOAA climate change study and again called for her assistance in guaranteeing NOAA's compliance with the subpoena.

**November 20, 2015:** NOAA responded to the Science Committee's letter to Secretary Pritzker by again refusing to comply with the subpoena.

**December 1, 2015:** As an accommodation, Chairman Smith sent a letter to Secretary Pritzker, prioritizing certain search terms for documents and communications from non-scientists – all in an effort to gain compliance.

**December 15, 2015:** NOAA provided certain documents and communications responsive to the Committee's subpoena.

**January 28, 2016:** Three-hundred-twenty-five scientists, engineers, economists, and scholars sent a letter to the Science Committee raising inquiries about NOAA's adherence to OMB guidelines established by the Data Quality Act with regard to peer review.

**February 11, 2016:** NOAA provided additional documents and communications in response to the Committee's subpoena.

**February 22, 2016:** Chairman Smith sent a letter to Administrator Sullivan expressing his disappointment in NOAA's failure to provide a full and complete production in response to the subpoena. He also asked the agency to broaden the scope of the search related to communications regarding the Karl study. Finally, he requested documents and communications related to NOAA's adherence to OMB peer review guidelines.

**March 14, 2016:** NOAA provided additional documents and communications in response to the Committee's subpoena.

**March 15, 2016:** NOAA replied to the Science Committee's letter noting their compliance and effort over the course of this investigation, yet the agency still was not in a position to certify that a full and complete production had been provided to the Committee.

**March 15, 2016:** Chairman Smith sent a letter to Administrator Sullivan reiterating his request for documents and communications related to NOAA's adherence to OMB peer review guidelines.