

The federal government's chief climate research agency is refusing to give House Republicans the detailed information they want on a controversial study on climate change.

Citing confidentiality concerns and the integrity of the scientific process, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said it won't give Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas) the research documents he subpoenaed.

At the center of the controversy is a study that concluded there has not been a 15-year "pause" in global warming. Some NOAA scientists contributed to the report.

Skeptics of climate change, including Smith, have cited the pause to insist that increased greenhouse gas emissions, mostly from burning fossil fuels, are not heating up the globe.

Smith, the chairman of the House Science Committee, vehemently disagreed with the study's findings. He issued a subpoena for communications among the scientists and some data, leading to charges from Democrats that he was trying to intimidate the researchers.

Late Tuesday, NOAA provided Smith with some more information about its methods and data but refused to give Smith everything he wanted. NOAA spokeswoman Ciaran Clayton said the internal communications are confidential and not related to what Smith is trying to find out.

"We have provided data, all of which is publicly available online, supporting scientific research, and multiple in-person briefings," she said.

"We stand behind our scientists who conduct their work in an objective manner. It is the end product of exchanges between scientists — the detailed publication of scientific work and the data that underpins the authors' findings — that are key to understanding the conclusions reached.

Clayton also refuted Smith's implication that the study was political.

"There is no truth to the claim that the study was politically motivated or conducted to advance an agenda," she said. "The published findings are the result of scientists simply doing their job, ensuring the best possible representation of historical global temperature trends is available to inform decision makers, including the U.S. Congress."

Smith defended his investigation, saying NOAA's work is clearly political.

"It was inconvenient for this administration that climate data has clearly showed no warming for the past two decades," he said in a statement. "The American people have every right to be suspicious when NOAA alters data to get the politically correct results they want and then refuses to reveal how those decisions were made."

Smith also said NOAA's assertion of confidentiality is incorrect.

"The agency has yet to identify any legal basis for withholding these documents," he said, adding that his panel would use "all tools at its disposal" to continue investigating.

Smith has been communicating with NOAA about the research since it was published in the summer, and their exchanges have grown increasingly hostile.

Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (Texas), the committee's ranking Democrat, has sharply criticized Smith's requests.

"By issuing this subpoena, you have instigated a constitutional conflict with an inquiry that seems more designed to harass climate scientists than to further any legitimate legislative purpose," she wrote last week. "This is a serious misuse of congressional oversight powers."

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/258375-agency-wont-give-gop-internal-docs-on-climate-research>

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