

Galveston County: The Daily News

Letter to the editor:
Everything *is* bigger in Texas, including climate change.

Mireya Valencia
Student at Pomona College

Earlier this month, President Trump released his budget plan for 2018. The proposed allowances call for a 1.2% decrease in discretionary spending overall, siphoning funds from government agencies to increase homeland security and military spending (Parlapiano and Aisch).

First on Trump's chopping block is the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA's 31% decrease in budget will eliminate one-fifth of the agency's staff positions and withdraw all funding for the Clean Power Plan (Parlapiano and Aisch). Under the reins of climate change denier and buddy of the fossil fuel industry, Scott Pruitt, the EPA is preparing to reignite the fossil fuel industry and reverse the Obama Administration's huge stride forward in climate change policy.

NASA will witness a 0.8% decrease in their budget—a modest cut in comparison to the EPA's, but one which will derail the agency nonetheless. This will remove \$102 million from NASA's Earth science budget, threatening programs such as PACE and OCO-3: initiatives that monitor how oceans and the atmosphere respond to climate change (Grush).

While scientists around the country mourn, the Trump Administration forges onward in its mission to bury climate change science. Ironically, the very skeptics that criticize climate science's credibility are the same people which prevent it from improving. In a strategic move, the Trump Administration is limiting the research that can be conducted and, consequently, ensuring that climate change science does not progress enough to interfere with their policies.

Regardless of what the head of the EPA may or may not believe, climate change is very real. Although Earth's temperatures naturally rise and fall over thousands of years, scientists have accumulated an impressive amount of data pointing to a recent spike in global temperature which deviates from Earth's natural patterns. The greenhouse gas-induced warming has caused ice caps to melt at an unprecedented rate, provoking sea levels to rise and endangering coastal regions such as Galveston and much of Texas (US EPA). Texas is also being hit twice as hard by climate change due to ground water pumping and oil drilling, which cause land to sink. Sinking land and rising sea levels prove a dangerous combo; the EPA estimates that Texas can expect sea levels to rise anywhere from two to five feet within the next century ("What Climate Change Means for Texas"). In practical terms, this means flooding – billions of dollars' worth of flooding. A recent study cross-examined maps released by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with house values in coastal areas across the United States. The study reveals that, with a sea level rise of six feet by 2100, 40 percent of homes in Galveston will be flooded, totaling a loss of \$2.9 billion ("Climate Change and Housing"). To learn more ways climate change will affect the livelihood of Eastern Texas and its residents, visit my blog: https://marclos.github.io/Climate_Change_Narratives/

With federal climate policy in the hands of climate change deniers, cities and states must pick up the slack and take a more aggressive stance towards climate change. California has taken the lead by pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030, as well as pushing for more zero-emission vehicles (Lazo). California, a largely liberal and Democratic state, has led the way for state-level climate change legislation for decades. Now, Texas needs to be an example for conservative states and show the nation that the environment is a concern for all, regardless of political affiliation.

Texas, unlike California, has the added obstacle of a largely Republican governing body. Local congressman Randy Weber, for instance, is a Republican and climate change skeptic. He is currently sponsoring an amendment which would prohibit funds from the EPA and require them “to evaluate the impact of its actions with respect to jobs in America” (“H.Amdt.1378 to H.R.5538”). Essentially, this amendment would put more restrictions on the EPA and would filter the information they can publish. Thankfully, you, the public, have a voice in how this all plays out. It only takes a few moments to visit the congressman’s website (<http://weber.house.gov/contact>) and express your concerns with his proposed legislation. In addition to contacting local politicians, you can also get involved with local organizations such as the Citizens’ Climate Lobby—a group fighting for a market-based Carbon Fee and Dividend implementation in Texas (“Fight Texas Climate Change”).

Works Cited

- “Climate Change and Housing: Will a Rising Tide Sink All Homes?” *Zillow Research*. N.p., 2 Aug. 2016. Web. 25 Jan. 2017.
- “Fight Texas Climate Change.” *Citizens’ Climate Lobby*. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Jan. 2017.
- “H.Amdt.1378 to H.R.5538 - 114th Congress (2015-2016).” legislation. N.p., 13 July 2016. Web. 1 Apr. 2017.
- Lazo, Alejandro. “California Aims for 40% Reduction in Greenhouse Gases by 2030.” *Wall Street Journal* 21 Jan. 2017. www.wsj.com. Web. 1 Apr. 2017.
- Lipton, Eric, and Coral Davenport. “Scott Pruitt, Trump’s E.P.A. Pick, Backed Industry Donors Over Regulators.” *The New York Times* 14 Jan. 2017. *NYTimes.com*. Web. 26 Jan. 2017.
- Parlapiano, Alicia, and Gregor Aisch. “Who Wins and Loses in Trump’s Proposed Budget.” *The New York Times* 15 Mar. 2017. *NYTimes.com*. Web. 16 Mar. 2017.
- “Texas Election Results 2016.” N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Jan. 2017.
- US EPA, OAR. “Climate Change: Basic Information.” *Overviews and Factsheets*. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Jan. 2017.
- “What Climate Change Means for Texas.” *United States Environmental Protection Agency* EPA 430-F-16-045 (2016): n. pag. Print.