

# 77 Groups Join to Counter Trump Administration Attack on “Science Advice”

Trump Executive Order Would Arbitrarily Slash Expert Advice, Threatening Public Health

By [Union of Concerned Scientists](#)

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*Political appointees in the Trump administration are already starting to eliminate science advisory committees, following a presidential executive order earlier this year directing agencies to reduce the total number of advisory committees by a third. This effort to undermine science advice has drawn strong opposition from the science community and a wide range of groups across civil society.*

[In a new letter](#), 77 of these groups are telling the White House to rescind this destructive executive order and restore science advice. The signers include a broad range of institutions, including major universities, scientific societies, public health experts, civil rights advocates, unions, farmers’ organizations, and groups focused on ethics and transparency in government.

[The letter](#) argues that federal advisory committees provide vital information to policymakers in a cost-effective way—and that we can’t make good decisions about public health and safety without considering the best independent science. It also notes that advisory committees provide an avenue for public input and comment into policy.

The signers argue that the executive order is a short-sighted measure that will force agencies to halt important work for the sake of hitting an arbitrary target. They call the effort to slash advisory committees “a threat to a vital independent source of information and deliberation.”

Quotes from organizations that have signed on to the letter:

“This executive order is a blunt instrument that will damage our ability to make smart, effective policies. It’s the latest example of a pattern across this administration of excluding science from government to the detriment of public health. It’s not just the scientists offering up their time to serve the public who will be hurt by these cuts—it’s communities across the country who deserve to benefit from policy based on evidence. The President needs to revoke this thoughtless executive order.” – Genna Reed, lead science and policy analyst for the Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists

“For decades, federal advisory committees have been key to ensuring our federal agencies sail to success in a sea of scientific and technological breakthroughs. Limiting or eliminating

them would be akin to setting sail across the ocean without any electronic navigation tools or even a sextant and a compass. We are very likely to get lost, sail around in circles, or even run aground as a result. I hope the president will rescind the Executive Order on Evaluating and Improving the Utility of Federal Advisory Committees before we find ourselves in extremis like this.” – Rear Admiral (Ret.) Jonathan White, president and CEO of the Consortium for Ocean Leadership

“As biologists and health care experts who work with patients daily, nurses join with our colleagues in the scientific community to demand that this administration rescind the executive order gutting the existence of federal advisory committees and value the essential advice that we provide to ensure government decisions are made based on fact and for the public good. Lives are at stake.” – Irma Westmoreland, vice president of National Nurses United and an RN at the Veterans Health Administration

“Policy related to human health—whether we are considering the influences of genetics, food and agriculture, the workplace, the ambient environment, or pharmaceuticals—must be based on current science. Economic interests must be tempered by scientific knowledge, not the other way around.” – Linda Forst, MD, MPH Senior Associate Dean, School of Public Health, University of Illinois at Chicago

“Federal advisory committees provide valuable stakeholder feedback to guide federal policies and programs that cannot, and should not, be underestimated. Eliminating scores of advisory committees without sound rationale serves to undermine the vital work federal agencies are tasked by Congress to do, including supporting beginning and disadvantaged farmers, furthering agriculture and food systems research, and informing the statistical needs of U.S. agriculture. Instead, we call upon the Administration to uphold the invaluable role of science and public input in policy decision-making.” – Nichelle Harriott, Policy Specialist, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

“Federal advisory committees are an essential tool in our work to ensure that the federal government is responsive to the needs of marginalized communities. The Executive Order on Evaluating and Improving the Utility of Federal Advisory Committees will arbitrarily remove the voice of stakeholders from decision-making and degrade our ability to participate in our democracy.” – Meghan Maury, Policy Director at the National LGBTQ Task Force

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