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Rep. Boehlert Responds to Accusations Concerning NASA's "Silencing" of Climate Scientist

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PRESS RELEASE

Date Released: Monday, January 30, 2006

Source: [House Science Committee](#)



WASHINGTON - House Science Committee Chairman Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) sent the attached letter today to Dr. Michael Griffin, Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), in response to articles in the New York Times and the Washington Post this weekend concerning NASA's treatment of Dr. James Hansen, Director of the Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

January 30, 2006

Dr. Michael Griffin
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Washington DC 20546

Dear Dr. Griffin:

I am writing in response to several recent news articles indicating that officials at NASA may be trying to "silence" Dr. James Hansen, the director of the Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

It ought to go without saying that government scientists must be free to describe their scientific conclusions and the implications of those conclusions to their fellow scientists, policymakers and the general public. Any effort to censor federal scientists biases public discussions of scientific issues, increases distrust of the government and makes it difficult for the government to attract the best scientists. And when it comes to an issue like climate change, a subject of ongoing public debate with immense ramifications, the government ought to be bending over backward to make sure that its scientists are able to discuss their work and what it means.

Good science cannot long persist in an atmosphere of intimidation. Political figures ought to be reviewing their public statements to make sure they are consistent with the best available science; scientists should not be reviewing their statements to make sure they are consistent with the current political orthodoxy.

NASA is clearly doing something wrong, given the sense of intimidation felt by Dr. Hansen and others who work with him. Even if this sense is a result of a misinterpretation of NASA policies



- and more seems to be at play here - the problem still must be corrected. I will be following this matter closely to ensure that the right staff and policies are in place at NASA to encourage open discussion of critical scientific issues. I assume you share that goal.

Our staff is already setting up meetings to pursue this issue and I appreciate NASA's responsiveness to our inquiries thus far. I would ask that you swiftly provide to the Committee, in writing, a clear statement of NASA's policies governing the activities of its scientists.

NASA is one of the nation's leading scientific institutions. I look forward to working with you to keep it that way, and to ensure that the entire nation gets the full benefit of NASA sciences.

Sincerely

[Signed]

Sherwood Boehlert
Chairman

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