

The [American Enterprise Institute](#) is an interesting organization, often shrilly ideological but also scholarly from time to time. I was curious to find out what kind of research they were doing on climate change. I did find some interesting policy papers on their [webpage](#) on the topic of climate policy. But here’s the surprising part: the latest paper on the subject is dated June 23, 2010. Of course, AEI has continued to produce a stream of [op-eds](#) on the subject, but no actual research.

The AEI is not alone in its lapsed research. There also seems to be no recent research on the subject by the [Cato Institute](#). The Heartland Institute’s [webpage](#) is more difficult to navigate, but I couldn’t find any recent research papers there either.

The failure of the leading conservative think tanks to maintain their research on such an important issue is disturbing. There are several possible reasons, all of them negative in terms of their implications for conservatism. Maybe researchers can’t work on climate issues any more, even to advocate conservative positions, because that would require taking the science seriously, which is verboten on the Right. Or perhaps the think tanks’ agendas are reactive, designed to attack liberal proposals but not to generate conservative policy responses on important issues. Or maybe the research agenda is driven by headlines rather than long-term social problems. None of these possible explanations bodes well for the capacity of the conservative movement to contribute to sound public policy.

When I went to these websites, I was hoping to find some serious research from a conservative perspective on climate change — serious in the sense of being driven by models, data, and science; conservative in the sense of minimizing reliance on government regulation. But I came up empty-handed.