"Mr. Jefferson's University"

The Virgnia Attorney General, taking a little time off from his frivolous litigation against healthcare reform, is engaged in a fishing expedition against the University of Virginia. He has issued a sweeping civil investigative demand (CID) for university records relating to climate researcher Michael Mann, for no evident legitimate purpose. After some equivocation, the University has decided to fight the document demand.

The University President said that issuance of the CIDs “has sent a chill through the Commonwealth’s colleges and universities – a chill that has reached across the country and attracted the attention of all of higher education.” The University’s preliminary filing makes out a compelling case that the Attorney General has exceeded his statutory authority because he has failed to link the request to evidence of any fraud against the state government, as required by the authorizing statute. But of course, the AG’s purpose isn’t to develop evidence of fraud; it’s to build his national reputation among the tea party crowd.

UVA’s founder was Thomas Jefferson, who once vowed “eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.” Jefferson would be just as pleased by the University’s stance as he would be fascinated by modern climate science.