

Lamar Smith (R-Tex.), who chairs the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, doesn't believe in climate change. Still, by current political standards, I guess we should be glad that he hasn't accused them of cheering when the Twin Towers fell, as his party's leading contender for the Presidency did to what he called "thousands and thousands" of innocent New Jersey Muslims recently. (If you're curious about that allegation, the Washington Post's [careful investigation](#) could find at most evidence that possibly — possibly! — a few teenagers outside a library in Patterson did act that way.) So that makes Smith a responsible citizen in today's political world. But still, Smith's conduct makes clear that he views scientific research as valid only if it fits his political views. His real agenda was made clear in a hearing last week, where he called state officials to testify against the EPA's Clean Power Plan — something that has only the most tenuous connection with a committee that is supposed to focus on science, space, and technology.

Smith's latest campaign against climate science is aimed at research published in the leading American scientific journal, *Science*, that reanalyzed data and rejected the previously accepted view of a warming pause during the last ten years. Smith claims it was rushed into print because the scientists themselves or higher-ups wanted to get it out to build support for Obama's climate agenda. The *Post* did find that some of the computer staff involved in the project wanted to delay for some unspecified longer time to allow further debugging of the software. But I doubt this is the first time in history that senior scientists have wanted to move forward with publication even though some of their subordinates wanted to run further tests.

As it turns out, the *Post* also discovered, the paper went through much more than the usual review process at the journal — and I'm told by people who have published research in *Science* that the *normal* peer review process is very intensive to begin with. That actually held up publication for several months.

Smith has never revealed what basis, if any, exists for his accusations of bad faith, but he claims to have received complaints of some kind from some unidentified disgruntled individuals. He seems to view that as a sufficient basis to launch wide-ranging subpoenas and threaten to hold a cabinet official in contempt.

The research in question was important, but it was at most data point in figuring out climate change. Discrediting the study wouldn't make much difference, particularly since the evidence for the last few years shows that whatever pause may or may not have existed has definitely ended. What does matter is Smith's determination to punish researchers with findings he dislikes with burdensome and intrusive data requests. He might have more credibility if he investigated the findings of climate skeptics with equal fervor.

