Yesterday, the Washington Post ran a piece by a scientist who was helping villages in Alaska prepare for climate change, until the Trump Administration abruptly transferred him to an accounting job. Here's another sign of the Administration's contempt for science: Pruitt's idea for a televised debate on the reality of climate change between climate scientists and deniers. Why a TV debate? Because "There are lots of questions that have not been asked and answered,"and "the American people would be very interested in consuming that." Put aside the fact that the science is settled at this point. If it's unsettled, is the way to decide complicated scientific disputes to go on TV and let the audience decide?

Of course, this should be no surprise. The *Washington Post* reported, Pruitt has led a campaign for Administration-wide action to challenge well-settled climate science. Given scientifically unfounded statements by other cabinet-level officials on the subject, he has presumably found a receptive audience.

Pruitt has reportedly relied more heavily on industry lobbyists than on EPA staff in making decisions. The *NY Times* discovered that, rather then obtaining expert input from staff, according to the *Post*, he "has outsourced crucial work to a network of lawyers, lobbyists, and other allies, especially Republican state attorneys general."[1] The schism between agency staff and the political appointees extends below Pruitt's level. For example, agency experts were dismayed when new rules governing the chemical industry were shaped by a deputy assistant who had been a lobbyist for the industry until her appointment.

Hostility to science begins at the top. Trump once called climate change a Chinese hoax, and the White House has refused to discuss whether he's changed his mind. He has left many key White House science and technology unfilled, and the few appointees do not regularly participate in his briefings (unlike Obama's practice). And don't forget the budget Trump proposed to Congress, which featured the following:

- EPA's research on air, climate, energy (EPA) would be cut 50% (to $46 million) Overall, EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) would be cut $223 million (roughly half)
- $900 million cut from DOE's Office of Science. Eliminates ARPA-E program.
- NOAA – $250 million cut in programs supporting "coastal and marine management, research, and education including Sea Grant."
- NASA — $102 million cut in funding for earth science program, terminating four missions relating to climate change.

This is not to mention the massive proposed cuts to research at the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation.

Maybe this will all appeal to the base – after all, a recent poll shows that in the past two years there's been a huge shift in Republican views about the value of higher education, with a majority now viewing colleges and universities as more harmful than beneficial to society.

President Trump gave a speech recently calling for a no-holds-barred defense of Western values. It's beginning to look like his Administration doesn't consider the creation and transmission of knowledge as part of what the West stands for – or American greatness.

The Founding Fathers would have been shocked at this betrayal of their values. Thomas Jefferson's passion for science is well-known, but he wasn't alone. In the very first annual presidential address to Congress, George Washington had this to say:"There is nothing which can better deserve your patronage, than the promotion of Science and Literature. Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of publick happiness."

In this as in many other respects, Donald Trump is no George Washington.