

There are some falsehoods which the United States government has now adopted as dogma. They aren't true but they're repeated day in and day out. Sadly, they're sometimes not even deliberate falsehoods, because the people who repeat them have been brainwashed into believing them or are just too ignorant to realize the actual facts.

1. **“Greenhouse gas emissions aren't causing climate change.”** This comes in various flavors, like “I'm not a scientist” and “We don't know how big a role human activities play.” We know a lot about the connection between carbon dioxide in particular and climate change — from gases trapped in ice cores in Antarctic and Greenland; from isotopes from the seabeds; from the successful predictions of computer models. If you're interested, Grist.org has a [page](#) with detailed answers to all of the major arguments made by climate change skeptics. But since the Trump Administration itself allowed publication of a government [report](#) contradicting its official climate skepticism, there really isn't much room for doubt here.
2. **“Eliminating environmental regulations will bring back coal miners' jobs.”** Not even the coal industry really believes this one. Demand for coal is falling mostly because of competition from natural gas and renewable energy. No one wants to build new coal plants because the economic handwriting is on the wall. For the same reason, the coal industry isn't going after new coal leases in the West, because they don't expect long-term demand. As the [Washington Post](#) reports, “for coal's champions, inside the administration and out, that's the rub: The domestic coal market shows no signs of fundamentally changing, and without renewed demand, there's no reason to pursue new leases.”
3. **“Renewable energy will ruin the reliability of the grid.”** Rick Perry asked DOE to do a report on renewables and grid reliability. It agreed with the expert consensus that with proper management the grid can handle a large share of renewable energy. That didn't stop him from demanding that FERC make consumers subsidize coal plants, of course. It does sound plausible to say that wind and solar can't be counted on, since the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow all the time. But the ability to import power from other areas, growing capacity for energy storage, and management of electricity demand provide ways of dealing with this problem. For instance, California uses a lot of solar but did just fine during a solar eclipse. Perry claims renewables and natural gas aren't reliable during extreme events, but that's not true either. You can find a rebuttal from a utility industry source [here](#).
4. **“Environmental regulations hurt economic growth.”** This has been a GOP mantra of course, most recently repeated by the White House's regulation czar. But the economic literature doesn't support this, not surprisingly because the costs of environmental regulation are small compared to the size of the economy. Remember

that the economy grew under Clinton and Obama, at the same time regulation was growing rapidly, while Bush's attacks on regulations didn't keep the economy from crashing. When California adopted cap-and-trade, conservatives said it would crash our economy. Instead, our economy is growing just fine, thank you. In contrast, the state of Kansas engaged in a massive experiment, following the GOP platform of big tax cuts and deregulation. As I explained in a [post](#) last December, the only effect was to wreck the government and weaken the state's economy.

5. **“Climate regulations were an Obama Administration power grab.”** Under Bush, the EPA refused to address climate change. The Supreme Court stepped in and told EPA in [Massachusetts v. EPA](#) it could consider only the science in deciding whether to regulate. Not surprisingly, given that hundreds if not thousands of studies support climate science, EPA found that climate change is real and harmful, and the finding was upheld in court. Given the science, EPA had no choice but to regulate. So if you don't think EPA should be regulating carbon emissions, don't blame the Obama Administration, blame the Supreme Court.
6. **“Extreme events aren't connected with climate change.”** One of the things we know about climate change is that it will amplify floods, droughts, wildfires, and heatwaves. Connecting any particular event with climate change can be difficult. But there's a limit to how long we can pretend that the disasters we're seeing across the country are just business as usual. If you're a heavy smoker and keeping having especially bad coughs, yes, maybe it's just a cold you'd have had anyway. But how long can you keep pretending, over and over, that there's no relationship between your smoking and all that coughing?
7. **“The Paris Agreement was a bad deal for the United States.”** Actually, the Agreement was a great deal. In return for agreeing to cut emissions at relatively low expense ourselves, we got the rest of the world to agree to cut their emissions — which cumulatively are much greater. So we get large reduction in U.S. climate impacts while paying only a fraction of the cost. You can find an explanation from a Harvard energy expert of why withdrawing from Paris is such a lame move [here](#). Basically, by joining an international effort, we agreed to help other countries with their climate issues but in return got a lot of free help from them in protecting ourselves from climate change.

Someone who can lie, insistently, with a straight face, is hard to deal with. But we can't let these lies take over the conversation. It is also disconcerting, to put it mildly, when your own government is dominated by people who are seemingly out of touch with reality. They may have the power to make policy right now. But policies based on falsehoods are doomed to crumble, because reality doesn't care what politicians say. As the saying goes, it is what it

is.