

The topline headlines look great:

CNN: Trump wants to slash funding for federal climate and weather research. Congress is about to tell him 'No'

Reuters: US Senate passes bill to boost federal science spending after White House sought major cuts

NBC: Congress passes bill to fund U.S. science agencies, rebuffing Trump's requested cuts

And there is some truth to this. Despite the Regime's Lysenko-ist War on Science, it looks like Congress is pushing back. The White House had proposed ludicrous cuts in scientific research agencies such as NOAA, NASA, and NSF. In its recent "minibus" appropriations bill for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, Congress has restored most of the funding that the Regime wanted wipe out.

Good news, right? Well, sort of.

Keep in mind that the ridiculous cuts were avoided, but as far as I can tell, at least at this point, all this bill does is *avoid* the worst damage, and makes the cuts not so bad. The overall bill reduces spending. NOAA's funding remains flat; NASA's science programs will get a 1% cut. Given inflation – which has increased since Trump took office – these cuts are a little deeper. As the CNN report noted:

> Rick Spinrad, who headed NOAA during the Biden administration, said beating back the cuts is important, but insufficient compared to the need to increase the weather and climate products that NOAA provides.
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> "I'm glad Congress is providing a voice of reason, but real improvement in services… will require more than just a stabilization to levels of past investments," he said.



Russ Vought: Ignorance Is Strength

And of course all of this does not answer the question of what will happen if and when OMB – led by knuckledragger Russ Vought, who said he wants federal workers "in trauma" – simply decides to impound funding and insists that Article II gives the President unilateral authority to do it. (And then gets a lawless Supreme Court to agree with him). CNN reports that:

> This administration has long flouted Congress' budget. For example, OMB has held money back from federal science agencies that Congress had previously appropriated. And some agencies, including parts of NOAA and NASA, were told to begin implementing the President's budget request, rather than waiting for Congress to act.
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> Language in the House and Senate appropriations bills would give the

> White House less maneuvering room to get creative with its spending and agency guidance absent congressional approval.

But of course, if the President has such unilateral authority under Article II, who cares what the language says?

Put another way, this ain't over yet. I expect major rescissions and impoundments in the months to come. Republicans in Congress are anxious to do this to avoid a shutdown. But in five months, Vought will come back to Congress and say that he won't spend the money. And you can't filibuster a rescission. I hope I am wrong about this.

In any event, it seems like the White House has used a technique long used by negotiators and now given a name by behavioral economists: anchoring. A more formal definition is when an initial number given causes the recipient to make judgments about subsequent numbers, even if the initial number has nothing to do with those numbers. Put another way, it's "a particular form of priming effect whereby initial exposure to a number serves as a reference point and influences subsequent judgments. The process usually occurs without our awareness."



Anchorer-In-Chief

Many years ago, I went to a department story that offered the so-called "fleet price" for a car. But the salesman wouldn't show me the fleet price until he showed me the MSRP. Then the fleet price looked really great! It actually *was* a pretty good deal – but I only knew that because I had done a lot of research beforehand. Millions of consumers don't, which is why so many salesmen use anchoring.

And it looks like the press was snookered again, proclaiming a victory or a "boost"

in science spending when it is, in fact, a cut.

They were assisted in this by Democratic Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, both of Washington State, who chair the relevant subcommittees in the process. I don’t blame them: they want to claim that they are pushing back, and they are. They have gotten the best deal that they could. But under the GOP, that deal is a lot worse than it should be.