

## CLIMATE

### Watchdog sues EPA over Pruitt's 'Squawk Box' interview

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*Published: Thursday, April 13, 2017*



A watchdog group is suing U.S. EPA over Administrator Scott Pruitt's climate statements. Photo courtesy of Flickr.

A watchdog group sued U.S. EPA today over Administrator Scott Pruitt's comments about carbon dioxide emissions' link to climate change during a March 9 television interview.

**Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility** filed the [lawsuit](#) in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, alleging that EPA failed to respond to the group's Freedom of Information Act request for records backing Pruitt's statements that human activity is not a "primary contributor" to climate change.

The watchdog filed a FOIA request the day after Pruitt's "Squawk Box" interview on CNBC, asking to see the studies upon which Pruitt based his claim and also to see if there is any EPA scientific finding that human activity is not the largest factor driving global climate change.

PEER notes that the agency's own climate change [webpage](#) cites as "basic information" that "[h]umans are largely responsible for recent climate change."

"This lawsuit tells Mr. Pruitt to put or shut up — produce his evidence or stop spouting deceptive climate pseudo-science," said PEER's Adam Carlesco, the attorney who filed the lawsuit after EPA failed to produce the requested materials within FOIA's statutory deadline.

"His confirmation as EPA administrator does not entitle Mr. Pruitt to ignore existing agency research and proclaim his own set of alternative facts," Carlesco added.

PEER noted that Pruitt's statements are contrary to EPA's 2009 finding that greenhouse gas emissions endanger public health, a determination based on a comprehensive review of available science that still remains EPA's official policy.

Conservatives groups have pressured Pruitt to revisit the so-called endangerment finding ([Greenwire](#), April 10).

Pruitt has told the White House that he won't try to reverse the finding, The New York Times reported yesterday, citing legal barriers.

The agency's science integrity official has launched a review of whether Pruitt violated policy with his remarks, at the urging of environmentalists who allege Oklahoma's former attorney general undermined EPA's mission and integrity ([E&E Daily](#), April 3). Sierra Club attorneys filed a formal complaint with EPA's inspector general last month.

Carlesco alleged today that any other EPA employee would be subject to disciplinary action for presenting personal views as official policy. "Even if Mr. Pruitt is presenting his personal opinion, he must specify that he is not speaking for the agency — a disclaimer he did not make," Carlesco said.

EPA didn't respond today to a request for comment.

Spokeswoman Liz Bowman defended Pruitt's remarks in an email to E&E News earlier this month.

"Administrator Pruitt makes no apologies for having a candid dialogue about climate science and commonsense regulations that will protect our environment, without creating unnecessary regulatory burdens that kill jobs. In fact, differing views and opinions on scientific and technical matters is a legitimate and necessary part of EPA's decision-making process, which is consistent with EPA's Scientific Integrity Policy that was in place even during the Obama administration," Bowman wrote.

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