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2008 Statement: Scientific Freedom and the Public Good

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The pursuit of science in an open society has played a large role in the policies that keep us safe and healthy and protect our environment. In recent years, however, the manipulation, suppression, and distortion of federal government science has misinformed the public and led to poor policy decisions.

On February 14, 2008, a group of prominent scientists called on the U.S. government to establish conditions that would enable federal scientists to produce the scientific knowledge that is needed by a government dedicated to the public good. In an accompanying report, UCS details specific steps that Congress and the administration can take to restore scientific integrity to federal policy making. The report also explores how science has been misused, with a special focus on systemic changes that hamper federal scientific capacity and make it more difficult for federal agencies like the EPA, FDA, and CDC to fulfill their missions.

The president and Congress will continue to face increasingly complex scientific and technical challenges. They have an historic opportunity codify the scientific freedoms needed for federal science to flourish. We are working to give them the tools to make this a reality.

Scientists and Engineers: Join more than 15,000 of your peers who have called for reform by endorsing [the 2008 Scientific Freedom and the Public Good Statement](#).

Non-scientists: Your participation in our campaigns is vital to our work to defend science from political interference. Please stay involved by [signing up here](#).

Scientific Freedom and the Public Good

February 14, 2008

Scientific knowledge and its successful applications have played a large role in making the United States of America a powerful nation and its citizens increasingly prosperous and healthy. The challenges that face the United States in the twenty-first century can only be met if this tradition is honored and sustained.

To that end, the U.S. government must adhere to high standards of scientific integrity in forming and implementing its policies. Breaches of this principle have damaged the public good and the international leadership of the United States. To meet its obligation to serve the public interest, the government must have reliable scientific work and advice at its disposal, and provide the public with reliable scientific information. This requires the government to provide federal scientists with the resources and the professional environment necessary to carry out their missions effectively and honestly. The government should also draw on the knowledge of federal scientists and of the larger scientific community to formulate public policy in an objective and transparent manner.

Scientists employed by government institutions commit themselves to serve the public good free from undisclosed conflicts of interest and to carry out science that is reliable and useful, while respecting statutory limitations such as national security laws. Therefore, government scientists should, without fear of reprisal or retaliation, have the freedom:

- to conduct their work without political or private-sector interference;
- to candidly communicate their findings to Congress, the public, and their scientific peers;
- to publish their work and to participate fully in the scientific community;
- to disclose misrepresentation, censorship, and other abuses of science; and
- to have their technical work evaluated by scientific peers.

We call on Congress and the executive branch to codify these freedoms, to establish stronger means for gathering scientific advice, and to take concrete steps to enhance transparency, so as to create conditions conducive to a thriving scientific enterprise that will serve our democracy with integrity and bring the full fruits of science to all Americans and to the world.

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Union of Concerned Scientists
National Headquarters
2 Brattle Square, Cambridge, MA 02138-3780

