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Lois Henry

LOIS HENRY: Independent thought not wanted at UCLA

The Bakersfield Californian | Saturday, Aug 14 2010 09:00 PM

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I know you're going to wonder why you should care about some brainiac getting the boot at UCLA. So let me start by explaining why it matters, then we'll get to the nitty gritty of what happened.

It matters because it looks like UCLA is firing this guy because his work on air pollution doesn't fit with popular thinking and it wants to shut him up.

Popular thinking, that air pollution is killing us, is lucrative to universities by way of government-funded research grants.

The guy who's getting sacked, James Enstrom, was one of only a few scientists willing to stick his neck out and blow the whistle on an outright fraud and coverup at the California Air Resources Board (CARB) over regulations that

will squeeze every wallet in this state once they're implemented.

Enstrom has been relentless, if not successful, in his efforts to get the air board to acknowledge that the science on the health effects of air pollution is not closed.

Moreover, he has demanded that the process of science-based regulation be honest, open and fair.

And that's why this really matters.

Out of step

Now, despite his 34 years as a researcher at UCLA, he's being dumped by a secret vote of the faculty in the Environmental Health Sciences Department.

Their official reason for not reappointing him is "your research is not aligned with the academic mission of the Department," according to a July 29 letter sent to Enstrom notifying him that his appeal of an earlier dismissal letter had been denied and his last day would be Aug. 30.

Department Chair Richard Jackson told me the faculty had no problem with scientific disagreement.

"They're not troubled by disagreement, but by poor quality science," he said, adding that "there are two sides to every story."

When I asked what about Enstrom's science had been subpar, Jackson said he would prefer I schedule a "formal interview" with him, which I did for the next day. He later canceled and referred me to Sarah Anderson, dean of communications for the School of Public Health.

Anderson e-mailed and asked what my questions were. I sent them and she replied that UCLA does not discuss personnel issues.

I objected that the faculty's opinion of Enstrom's published scientific work isn't a personnel issue.

I got nothing back.

Several other Environmental Sciences faculty members did not return my calls.

Beate Ritz, a leading air pollution scientist with UCLA who works in the Epidemiology Department, did respond.

She said she hadn't read Enstrom's 2005 study on air pollution.

But, based on his 2003 findings that second-hand cigarette smoke doesn't kill people, she said she knows him "for letting his interpretations go beyond the data and his personal biases to be strong enough to not allow for a balanced and appropriately cautious interpretation of the numbers."

Her attitude wasn't surprising to Enstrom, who said his 2003 paper, published in the British Medical Journal, was widely attacked.

"Not a single error was ever identified in that paper and I refuted all claims made against me and my research," he said. "My work isn't about being politically correct, it's about honest research and being faithful to the science."

Noted toxicologist Robert Phalen, who co-directs the Air Pollution Health Effects Laboratory at the University of California, Irvine, said Enstrom's science is very high quality. He theorized it has been Enstrom's outside activities, such as agitating at the air board, that did him in rather than his science.

"Jim was definitely out of step" with the direction of the leaders of his department, Phalen said.

Jackson himself alluded to that, saying the faculty were also troubled by Enstrom's presentation at a symposium in February put on by CARB to discuss the science examining air pollution's health effects. He didn't say exactly what about the presentation was upsetting.

Tangling with CARB

The Environmental Science mission statement says the department is "committed to furthering research and education at the interface between human health and the environment."

Enstrom has done exactly that with his studies, most notably one published in 2005 that shows no evidence of premature deaths in California due to exposure to PM2.5.

PM2.5 is tiny bits of dust and soot that CARB is trying to regulate to a gnat's hind end.

Specifically, CARB has regulations pending that would render today's trucking and heavy construction fleets inoperable in California.

The rationale for the regulations is that, based on numerous studies, PM2.5 kills thousands of Californians each year.

Enstrom's 2005 study was peer-reviewed and published in well-respected journals and, while some have disagreed with his conclusions, the study and its methodology have held up.

Yet, when a health effects report used to justify the new trucking regulations was written by CARB staffer Hien Tran, Enstrom's study was misquoted and discounted, as were others that don't support the notion that PM2.5 kills.

Tran, it was discovered by Enstrom and others, had lied about having a Ph.D in statistics from UC Davis.

Enstrom's bell clanging over Tran later revealed that CARB chairwoman Mary Nichols knew about Tran's falsification but kept mum to other board members until after they voted to approve the trucking rules.

As an aside, I'm still aghast that both Tran and Nichols have kept their jobs. Really, we can't find two people in the entire state who can do this job honorably?

Making friends

Back to Enstrom. He also single-handedly got scientist John Froines kicked off the Scientific Review Panel, a state organization tasked with identifying toxic contaminants.

And, as luck would have it, Froines is a voting faculty member of UCLA's Environmental Sciences Department.

It was the Scientific Review Panel that in the 1990s declared diesel exhaust is toxic. That declaration triggered CARB to gin up regulations to reduce the amount of diesel PM2.5 in the air, which is what brought on the truck and heavy equipment regulations we're now facing.

Scientists are supposed to apply for and be appointed to the Scientific Review Panel on three-year terms. Froines was appointed in 1984 and continued to sit on that panel for more than 25 years though he was only reappointed a couple of times in the early years.

It's not just an issue of needing new blood. The Scientific Review Panel verifies and approves methodologies for studies that are government-funded.

Froines is also head of the Southern California Particle Center, which conducts such government-funded studies. All of which makes his de facto lifetime appointment seem more than a little conflicty.

When Enstrom brought that to the attention of the Legislature, Froines was kicked off the panel.

I called Froines to see how he felt about that and his views on Enstrom but he didn't call back.

The offense of not going along

Enstrom told me he doesn't believe his colleagues have done bad science, per se, on air pollution.

His main concern has been with how one-sided and self-fulfilling the entire system has become.

CARB exists to regulate air pollution. It funds studies looking for ill effects of air pollution. Any effects found are used to justify more regulations and, hence, more studies.

Finding "no effects" doesn't fit into that cycle.

Then, of course, there's ego.

A scientist's work is considered more important if it points out a hazard rather than saying "everything's fine," Phalen said.

"Jim's work offends people because it diminishes the importance of their work," Phalen said.

Even accidental findings of "no effects" have been ignored.

In one major national study by Daniel Krewski, a map shows PM2.5 had little to no effect of premature deaths in California. And just recently Michael Jerrett revealed preliminary data from his CARB-funded California specific study that also showed little to no evidence of premature death from PM2.5 exposure.

That map has since disappeared from later uses of the Krewski study. And Jerrett has said perhaps mortality calculations should be changed.

"They've decided that no one else can have a say," Enstrom said. "Valid research is being stifled."

Enstrom had been in line to receive funding for a new study from the Health Effects Institute, but that likely won't happen after he loses his UCLA position.

All of this may seem like so much academic inside baseball. But these studies and how they're treated result in regulations that have real-life consequences.

Phalen noted that we are in a period in our culture where science is used to fuel movements rather than to elucidate. Going against the movement puts careers at risk.

Phalen himself is no stranger to swimming against the tide, having published a book in 2002 titled "The Particulate Air Pollution Controversy." He concluded that our hamfisted manner of setting environmental standards has created a regulatory environment that doesn't consider secondary consequences and may result in more harm than good.

Though Phalen couldn't say whether that book cost him his position on Froine's Southern California Particle Center, he wasn't reappointed after it was published.

So much for welcoming diversity of thought.

Opinions expressed in this column are those of Lois Henry, not The Bakersfield Californian. Her column appears Wednesdays and Sundays. Comment at people.bakersfield.com/home/Blog/noholdsbarred, call her at 395-7373 or e-mail lhenry@bakersfield.com

22 Comments

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gkabat 2 weeks ago



[horsenaround and 23 more liked this.](#)

Beate Ritz's statements regarding the firing of epidemiologist Jim Enstrom by UCLA, as reported by Lois Henry, are both appalling and revealing. Ritz states that she did not read Enstrom's 2005 paper on air pollution – even though she is an air pollution expert – before voting against him, but, rather, formed an opinion based on the 2003 BMJ paper on environmental tobacco smoke by Enstrom and Kabat. Her judgment of the latter paper reveals an astonishing ignorance, since our results do not differ from those of a number of other published studies, including those of the American Cancer Society. It is also quite clear that Enstrom's 2005 results regarding mortality associated with PM2.5 in California are in line with the results of other major studies. Thus, Ritz's take on the paper she read and the paper she didn't read are equally faulty. But she has made it abundantly clear that Enstrom is being sacked not for his scientific work, which is impeccable, but for actually taking the results seriously and having the courage to speak up on issues, where, given the considerable vested interests of many researchers in this area, his unpopular position is to be silenced at all costs. UCLA's treatment of an honest and accomplished researcher, who has been at the institution for 34 years, will leave a blot on the school's reputation.

Geoffrey Kabat
Albert Einstein College of Medicine
Bronx, New York



gilross 2 weeks ago

22 people liked this.

UCLA, especially the Dept. of Environmental Health, should be ashamed. Hopefully some other faculty more respectful of academic freedom will seize the opportunity to recruit Dr. Enstrom--UCLA's loss thereby becoming someone else's gain. If his work was not up to UCLA's scientific standards, how come no specific instance could be cited? Why did this clearly ad hoc offense take five years to be discovered--just in time to suppress his efforts against the regulatory thicket now strangling California's economy. Could the fact that the CA regulatory industry is the most stringent in the USA explain the economic crisis there? Firing non-PC experts like Dr. Enstrom instead of dealing with real risk assessment of air pollution, chemicals, etc etc ad infinitum, is not productive--but is far easier than facing complex reality. Gil Ross MD The American Council on bakersfield.com/.../Independent-thoug...



SWVoice 2 weeks ago



[witterpitters and 17 more liked this.](#)

This story could have been about any topic. The bottom line is that Lois is saying - Hey people let's be honest here. It seems that everything these days is about winning. As if life is some big sporting event. Left, Right, Liberal, Conservative. Just win baby, the hell with truth or facts, Lois is looking for honesty... Most of her articles have that theme. For that Lois, I salute you.



witterpitters 2 weeks ago

17 people liked this.

God forbid we don't all march in "lock step".

I'm not a scientist, nor an academic, however I have a truck load of common sense, I read and listen, and that tells me "We The People" need to take a closer look at what is going on in education in this country. We need to put a huge STOP sign in front of government regarding the education of our children.

The K-12 grades are failing miserably and those who make it through the education maze find themselves in colleges that blatantly profess liberalism and nothing else. I have heard of students who were ostracized in college classes because they had a differing opinion than the professor. Students have been given failing grades for their dissention. Students have been told how 'wrong' they are for their differing opinions. THAT in and of itself is disheartening and just wrong, I thought our classrooms were supposed to be for actually discussing different views.

It does seem there is not of common sense around much any more. Lois seems to be the "lone" voice of 'take off the rose coloured glasses, clean your ears out and take a close look at where our colleges/universities are leading our youth'. The primrose path is loaded with pot holes.

IMO – a one world view would/will be boring as hell!!!

Follow the money.



Mike55 2 weeks ago

12 people liked this.

I thought this was a great article, I work in the industry and have seen this happen many times. New compliance issues that cost companies a lot of money are forced upon them and they do not even work. It seems that a lot of special interest groups get rich. UCLA knows where it's money comes from.



WilSpeaking 2 weeks ago

12 people liked this.

9/2/2010

LOIS HENRY: Independent thought no...

Sadly it seems to be endemic in our educational system and especially our research facilities, you get paid to find what your benefactors want you to find or ostracized if you don't.

Don't just follow where the money goes, but also where the power flows.

Another good example might be the "science" behind anthropogenic global warming. IMO



integritycounts 2 weeks ago

10 people liked this.

Unremarkable, reading through the comments here, I'm shocked that are still so many individuals who must not have actually read Mrs. Henry's well researched story as they continue to believe that there is "overwhelming epidemiological evidence of the harmful health effects of PM2.5". The fact is, that's what this story is all about, scientific studies that are not "overwhelming". The facts are, the research (at least 5 major PM2.5 released studies in the last 10 years) shows underwhelming health effects evidence and the fact that there are no actual measurable health effects associated with PM2.5 on Californians. Clearly, there is not enough evidence to justify the present draconian CARB diesel engine related regulations. Environmental activists whom now make up the majority of academics within the UC system and UCLA are angry about the public disclosure of this fact by one of their researchers - Dr. Enstrom. Ironically, his work has been thoroughly peer reviewed by many of the same people who now helped to get him fired. His work is impeccable by most objective standard, but unfortunately it is politically incorrect. Clearly, his firing is focused on repressing his academic freedoms, his first amendment rights, and his politically incorrect research - these are all something American's should be afraid of - even those who disagree with his research. Most Americans use to cherish this country where both sides were respected and received equal and valued weight - not the AXE!



learnem 2 weeks ago

9 people liked this.

great column Lois

It shows how absurd some governmental agencies can be. The big let down though is the lack of fostering independent thought at what I once thought was one of the top 20 prestigious colleges in the country....UCLA

boy was I wrong



airqualityguy 2 weeks ago

8 people liked this.

Despite overwhelming epidemiological evidence of the harmful health effects of PM 2.5, Enstrom keeps insisting there is no direct evidence linking this pollution to specific causes of death. The tobacco industry got away with that kind of science for years. No wonder he was fired.



WilSpeaking 2 weeks ago [in reply to airqualityguy](#)

19 people liked this.

Got any cites or at least links to somewhere showing that what you are saying is not just "hot air"? Or to put it another way, can you direct us to the evidence you espouse ?



T17 2 weeks ago [in reply to airqualityguy](#)

10 people liked this.

"Enstrom's 2005 study was peer-reviewed and published in well-respected journals and, while some have disagreed with his conclusions, the study and its methodology have held up."

"Tran, it was discovered by Enstrom and others, had lied about having a Ph.D in statistics from UC Davis.Enstrom's bell clanging over Tran later revealed that CARB chairwoman Mary Nichols knew about Tran's falsification but kept mum to other board members until after they voted to approve the trucking rules."

"Back to Enstrom. He also single-handedly got scientist John Froines kicked off the Scientific Review Panel, a state organization tasked with identifying toxic contaminants.And, as luck would have it, Froines is a voting faculty member of UCLA's Environmental Sciences Department."

Yah AQG, you're right. Enstrom has no credibility.



learnem 2 weeks ago [in reply to airqualityguy](#)

5 people liked this.

overwhelming? studies done by people who were PAID by the government, who told them what they want

not to mention Tran...or did you forget him? Yes, that fraud is still on the payroll at CARB...researching even more studies

that is great news for people like me. Just more to denounce

your global warming bandwagon's wheels are getting loose, about ready to fall off, and parking it in the creek wont help this time



integritycounts 2 weeks ago

7 people liked this.

Unremarkable there is one "air quality guy" and 6 similar intellectually wanting individuals who must not have actually read Mrs. Henry's well researched story or can't apparently understand it, as they continue to believe that there is "overwhelming epidemiological evidence of the harmful health effects of PM2.5". The fact is, that's what this story is all about, scientific studies that are not "overwhelming". The facts are that the research (at least 5 major studies in the last 10 years) shows underwhelming evidence that there are no health effects associated with PM2.5 on Californians, and the enviromental activists are angry about the public disclosure of this fact by one of the researchers - Dr. Enstrom. Clearly, his firing and attempt to repress his first amendment rights is something we should all be affraid of - even air quailty guy and his misguided followers.



9/2/2010

LOIS HENRY: Independent thought no...



saberhagen 2 weeks ago



[adampayne and 6 more liked this.](#)

On the other hand.....

Painting Enstrom as a heroic maverick genius shunned by greedy peers might be a stretch.

It might be perfectly reasonable for Enstrom's UCLA peers to question or even refute the veracity of Enstrom's research, apparently believing it is flawed.

Who is best qualified to review and judge a scientist's work than his scientific peers or at least someone possessing credible knowledge of the subject?

If UCLA were to assemble a panel of scientists to study the shape of the world, must they include someone with "proof" derived from flawed research that the world is flat?

Just sayin'.....



reformer 2 weeks ago

6 people liked this.

This scenario sounds very similar to Ben Stein's expose' on evolution, "Expelled."



adampayne 2 weeks ago



[airqualityguy and 4 more liked this.](#)

Broad enough brush to use attacking academics at UCLA?

So the point of this article is what exactly?

UCLA only accepts those researchers and professors who are lock step with some political ideology, and intellectual diversity is not tolerated on the campus? That the science and studies indicating health risks associated with air pollution, and pm 2.5 are all bogus? That the EPA and CARB have no right to apply scientific studies to try and mitigate high levels of known pollutants that pose serious public health risks? That the new regulations, which are to be implemented over a thirteen year period for the small fleets making up 50% of all trucking firms in California, will kill all trucking business in the state? That the people of this state should only accept studies from scientists in the private industrial sectors because they are free from any conflict of interest? That CARB and the EPA should be eliminated?

I am truly disheartened to read this current column of yours, but my opinion is surely a minority voice here. We live in an area where air pollution is at some of the worst levels in all the US, only Pittsburgh and Los Angeles might outrank us on a given day. Private industry has repeatedly shown its disdain to do anything to lessen pollution, and only fed up citizens forced to litigate or band together to force legislation have made the small positive differences in our air over the past forty years.

I have sadly watched so many of the environmental protections enacted nearly forty years ago, get turned back or ignored by large companies who have found it easier, and more profitable, to pay the small fines for violations than to comply with health and safety rules. Your column endorses

bakersfield.com/.../Independent-thoug...

industry's stance regarding our ever worsening environment.



harleyrider1978 2 weeks ago

4 people liked this.

Dr kabat and Dr. enstrom,

I thank both of you for your fine work these past decades, your honesty in science holds the standard that the public both deserves and demands. What the public has received is public health fraud in science and propaganda used to disallow the rights and liberties of the people. Regulations without warrant and constitutional liberties silenced and criminalized based upon hate and bigotry. We the people can no longer trust science from public health to be beyond reproach any longer. That is what has happened the most, The lost trust of the public in science, medicine and especially in government.

Please take a firm stand and continue to fight the blatant misuse of science as a basis to outlaw the basic freedoms of the people. America needs both of you to stand tall in her hour of need, with the firm stand you have taken in the face of such open actions against yourselves by others. Your voice is what may give other scientists and professionals the push to finally step up and defy the current nanny state mentality in the scientific community. As Dr even in paris recently stated:

Why not speak up earlier?

As a civil servant, dean of the largest medical faculty in France, I was held to confidentiality. If I had deviated from official positions, I would have had to pay the consequences. Today, I am a free man.

Le Parisien

Thank you, harleyrider1978 let freedom be the individuals right.



adampayne 2 weeks ago

2 people liked this.

After so many of these responses, which range from denouncing all science regarding climate change and objecting to the overwhelming evidence regarding the health risks associated with fine particulate matter emissions from fossil fuels, I still have to ask exactly what is the point of this column? The researcher, James Enstrom, indicated he had no problem with the science concerning air pollution. His objections to some conclusions based on that science are documented and public record. He was dismissed after 34 years, and we have speculation to go on as to the reasons of his dismissal. To imply that the near total consensus on the science surrounding the harmful effects of PM2.5 is questionable astounds me, and to impugn the integrity of all the faculty at UCLA seems completely off the wall. To ignore, or to acknowledge we have major pollution issues here locally while attempting to repudiate the measures the government in the public interest has taken to mitigate the problem, only serves the interests of the major emitters of these harmful emissions.

9/2/2010

LOIS HENRY: Independent thought no...

The oil cartel thanks you for your service, the factory agriculture producers thank you, as well. The people who continue to believe that government is the root of all evil thank you, which is why people today have been reduced to serfdom, and have no place to turn to address so many of our grievances. Here are two articles from respected sources on this matter.

http://www.ucsusa.org/scientific_integrity/abuses_of_science/epa-air-pollution-decision.html

<http://www.newsroom.heart.org/index.php?s=43&item=1029>

People, I guess, will believe what they choose to believe these days, and overwhelming consensus within the scientific community be damned if it does not meet their belief bar.



T17 2 weeks ago [in reply to adampayne](#)

4 people liked this.

(The Environmental Science mission statement says the department is "committed to furthering research and education at the interface between human health and the environment.")

Maybe this (above) is one of the reasons Lois wrote this.

"In one major national study by Daniel Krewski, a map shows PM2.5 had little to no effect of premature deaths in California. And just recently Michael Jerrett revealed preliminary data from his CARB-funded California specific study that also showed little to no evidence of premature death from PM2.5 exposure."

So you want us to just take YOUR preferred studies and ignore the rest by Enstrom and others? Maybe some of us are just saying 'the jury is still out', thats all.

"People, I guess, will believe what they choose to believe these days, and overwhelming consensus within the scientific community be damned if it does not meet their belief bar."

Yes, perhaps. It seems you and UCLA fit this as well.

UCLA Environmental Science is appearing like a bunch of junior high kids telling the unpopular kid to 'Just go away. We dont like you.'



bakonative 2 weeks ago

1 person liked this.

I'm not into politics by any means. But can I just say, this valley of ours is deadly with pollution? Our lungs, smokers and non smokers alike are suffering, we have been for years, and it will continue. If some big reseacher says its true, and California wants to cover it up, they will. Result is the same though and who is going to stop it?



airqualityguy 2 weeks ago

1 person liked this.

Here is an article explaining a lot of the controversy about Enstrom which Lois Henry, by omission, must think is irrelevant.

<http://www.cspinet.org/integrity/watch/200606122.html#>

Tobacco Scientist Moves On to Particulate Matter

A new industry-funded study downplaying the risks of particulate matter (PM) was authored by a researcher who previously published studies downplaying the risks of second-hand smoke, documents available at the Legacy Tobacco Documents Library at the University of California at Los Angeles show. The Electrical Power Research Institute hired James E. Enstrom of the University of California at Los Angeles to analyze 30 years of air pollution data. His recently published analysis, which showed PM had no effect on mortality after the initial ten years of the study, is now being used by industry trade groups in their letters to the EPA arguing against a tighter PM standard. Enstrom's study, published in Inhalation Technology, was subsequently questioned in the same journal by Bert Brunekreef, a highly-regarded professor of environmental health at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

In 1997 Enstrom asked Philip Morris scientific affairs director Richard Carchman for \$150,000 to study the link between environmental tobacco smoke and mortality rates. "A substantial research commitment on your part is necessary in order for me to effectively compete against the large mountain of epidemiologic data and opinions that already exist regarding the health effects of ETS and active smoking," he wrote. In 2003, Enstrom's study, "Environmental tobacco smoke and tobacco related mortality in a prospective study of Californians, 1960-98," concluded that it is "premature to conclude that environmental tobacco smoke causes death from coronary heart disease and lung cancer." The study appeared in the British Medical Journal, after being rejected by the Journal of American Medical Association. Enstrom recently founded the Scientific Integrity Institute, which offers "epidemiologic research services . . . designed to investigate weak and/or controversial epidemiologic relationships with the highest level of scientific integrity." The example posted on the site is his 2003 tobacco study.



harleyrider1978 2 weeks ago [in reply to airqualityguy](#)

5 people liked this.

As I recall the cancer institute dropped it because preliminary results werent good for the anti-tobacco movement so they withdrew sponsorship. The ACS then wrote a policy statement after the fact that they would from then forward withdraw funding at anytime for any reason. I guess that nobody likes to waste RWJF and relay for life dollars on propaganda studies unless the results make a headline worthy of the investment. FORSALE Research to the highest bidder,we guarantee the results you want.....Likewise is anti-tobaccos polling researchers.....always a 70% in favor headline.....+/- 3%

