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From: POLITICO Pro
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Subject: Scientific integrity panel clears Pruitt over CO2 comments

By Alex Guillén

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A panel of EPA employees says Administrator Scott Pruitt's controversial March comments on television that carbon dioxide is not the primary driver of climate change did not violate the agency's scientific integrity policy.

"Expressing an opinion about science is not a violation of the EPA Scientific Integrity Policy," the panel wrote.

The panel's two-paragraph finding was included in a [letter](#) from Thomas Sinks, director of EPA's Office of the Science Advisor, addressed to the Sierra Club, which formally complained about Pruitt's comment but said it had not received a copy of the response.

EPA earlier today sent out a press release touting an article on the letter in the conservative [Washington Free Beacon](#).

The agency's scientific integrity policy "specifically encourages employees to express their opinion should the employee disagree with scientific data, scientific interpretations, or scientific conclusions," the panel wrote, noting that Pruitt "did not suppress or alter Agency scientific findings."

The special panel was formed by EPA's [Scientific Integrity Committee](#), which is made up of high-ranking EPA officials. It did not comment on the accuracy of his statement, which departs from the scientific consensus that carbon dioxide is the primary driver of global warming.

Elena Saxonhouse, a senior attorney with Sierra Club, said in a statement that the group had "been told by EPA staff that the proper process is for the party that filed the complaint to be informed first, not the media." She added: "Pruitt's 'opinions' can have especially weighty consequences for the many scientists working below him, yet the letter treats him like any other employee."

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