

# Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin

## [May 10, 2021]



*Our weekly bulletin collects and digests news of the past week.  
Contributions welcome.*

*[Click here](#) to view this weekly news bulletin on a web page. Previous weeks' bulletins are archived [here](#).*

### **NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES**

*The Scientist: [White House assembles task force to sever politics from science](#)*

*The 46-person panel has been given the goal of reinstating public trust in science by removing partisan pressure from policy making. The newly formed task force has 120 days to find where politically motivated deficiencies have influenced federal policy since 2009 and will have an additional 120 days after that to compile their recommendations for eliminating that influence.*

*The Guardian: [Michael Lewis: “We were incentivized to have a bad pandemic response”](#)*

*In his new book, the author of *The Big Short* has turned his attention to Covid and the people who could have prevented it sweeping the US—had they been allowed to.*

*Nature: [NASA reboots its role in fighting climate change](#)*

*The space agency aims to breathe new life into its Earth-science program as US President Joe Biden pushes an ambitious climate agenda. Biden initially left the agency off the high-level climate task force he established a week after taking office in January. Following some pointed phone calls, NASA muscled its way into that group.*

*AIP: [Physical chemist Geri Richmond picked for top DOE science job](#)*

*University of Oregon physical chemist Geraldine Richmond has been nominated for the position of undersecretary for science and energy at the Department of Energy. Richmond has longstanding connections to DOE and its national labs and has been a member of the National Science Board since 2012.*

*National Geographic: [“Megadrought” persists in western U.S., as another extremely dry year develops](#)*

*Below average precipitation last winter and dwindling snowpack in the mountains, both exacerbated by human-caused climate change, are making for a dire drought in the western United States. The U.S. Drought Monitor estimates that 57 million people are living in drought areas in western states right now. The long-running dry stretch rivals anything in the last 1,200 years, a sign of climate-change induced "aridification."*

*Morning Ag Clips: [FACA recommends USDA use pilot projects to build toward a carbon bank](#)  
The Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA) has worked over the past three months to develop specific recommendations for how the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) should approach a potential carbon bank. A voluntary, USDA-led carbon bank is one policy mechanism being considered to help reduce barriers that producers and landowners face to participating in voluntary carbon markets and adopting climate-smart practices.*

## **REGIONAL NEWS**

*IndyStar: [Lawmakers void all local COVID-19 restrictions with override of Holcomb's veto](#)  
Indiana lawmakers on Monday, May 10, voted to override Gov. Eric Holcomb's veto of Senate Bill 5, an action that voids local COVID-19 restrictions across the state. Senate Bill 5 terminates local health orders from local health officials more stringent than the ones ordered by the state. To go back into effect, they will need to be approved by local city councils, mayors, or county legislative bodies, depending on who has jurisdiction. The Indianapolis City-County Council moved quickly, as anticipated, to keep the current Marion County public health orders in place Monday night, using the process put in place by Senate Bill 5.*

## **OPINION AND ANALYSIS**

*Jacobin: [Big Tech's censors come for science](#)  
Over the past few months, Facebook, Google, and Twitter have engaged in multiple acts of censorship against scientists holding a range of views on COVID-19 and the public health response to it. This censorship sets a dangerous precedent — allowing large, unaccountable corporations to set themselves up as arbiters of not only acceptable public speech, but also of what constitutes acceptable science.*

*Vox: [The Biden administration has a game-changing approach to nature conservation](#)  
The Biden administration is about to embark on a historic mission: to conserve 30 percent of the nation's land and water by 2030. The initiative to reach 30 percent, called "America the Beautiful," aims to redefine what constitutes "conserved" land, to make that new definition distinct from "protected" land, and to cede power to local communities and tribal nations to reach that target. At the same time, it promises to provide disadvantaged communities with more access to parks and the benefits of nature.*

*Physics Today: Q&A: [David Kennedy is the new chair of the US Arctic Research Commission](#)  
David Kennedy was named by President Biden to serve as chair of the US Arctic Research Commission (USARC), a body that advises the White House and Congress on matters related to the Arctic. Kennedy brings decades of experience in the Arctic and in science administration to his new role. The well-being of Indigenous people,*

environmental sustainability, and climate change will be major focuses of the commission, he says.

World Politics Review: [To prevent future pandemics, start by protecting nature](#)

*Most reports on pandemic preparedness focus on controlling outbreaks after they start, rather than averting them in the first place. Moving from reaction to prevention requires identifying and mitigating the main drivers of new infectious diseases. These drivers are almost entirely anthropogenic and are the same forces responsible for precipitous declines in global biodiversity. The path to global health security, in other words, begins with protecting nature.*

Inside Higher Ed: [Europe struggles to build common area for science](#)

*At the turn of the millennium, the European Union, worried that it was falling behind the U.S. and Japan in science and innovation, committed to a lofty goal: a European research area (ERA). It envisioned an E.U. where “people and knowledge can circulate more freely,” the integration of scientists in eastern and western Europe, and for countries to “coordinate” what type of research they funded to avoid policy “overlap.” Today ERA remains an “unfinished project.”*

## **TAKE ACTION AND RESOURCES FOR ACTIVISTS**

UCS: [How can scientific organizations support science advocacy? 5 ways to get started](#)

*Just as research provides the basis for many scientists’ advocacy goals, it can provide a basis for their movement-building strategies as well. A recent strategy brief developed by the Science Advocacy Working Group of the Union of Concerned Scientists Science Advocacy Working Group distills recommendations for using insights from the social sciences to increase the effectiveness of science advocacy and public engagement.*

The CSIU Weekly News Bulletin is now available on the web. To view this page online go to <https://csiub.org/weekly-news-bulletins>. To view archives of past bulletins, see <https://csiub.org/bulletin-archives>.

Our CSIU news bulletin is intended to provide a brief update on recent news, editorials, as well as action items related to science integrity and science policy. Note that editorial pieces and action items are assembled from a variety of sources and organizations; they do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policy priorities of Concerned Scientists @ IU. This week’s news bulletin was compiled by CSIU member Christoph Irmscher of IU’s Department of English and by ASIU member Emma Hand, a junior We’re looking for volunteers! If you’d like to volunteer—or if you have additional links you’d like to share for future bulletins, send them to Christoph at [cirmsche@indiana.edu](mailto:cirmsche@indiana.edu).

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