

# Concerned Scientists' Weekly News Bulletin [November 29, 2021]



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

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## **NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES**

**NPR:** [Merriam-Webster's 2021 word of the year is, of course, "vaccine"](#)

In 2020, the Merriam-Webster dictionary selected "pandemic" as its word of the year. This year, like some 59% of fully inoculated Americans, it went with "vaccine." The publishing company noted that the word holds particular significance both as a medical term and a vehicle for ideological conflict. Lookups for the word increased 601% year-over-year from 2020, and were up 1,048% from 2019, the dictionary said.

**Washington Post:** [White House creates new energy division to help craft climate change policies](#)

The White House has launched a new energy division of its Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and appointed Sally Benson, a well-known energy expert at Stanford University, to a high-level position to contribute to climate change policy.

**NBC:** [Billions and trillions: Climate efforts set for big boost if Build Back Better bill passes](#)

"These are the biggest pieces of climate policy legislation the U.S. has seen in a decade," said Katharine Hayhoe, a climate researcher and the chief scientist at The Nature Conservancy. "The faster we can act, the better off we'll be, because we're already late to the table. The time for half-measures was 30 years ago."

**E & E News:** [Arctic Ocean has been "Atlantifying" for at least a century](#)

Scientists already knew that Atlantification has been happening for decades, thanks to data collected by satellites. And they know it's likely to get worse as the Arctic keeps warming. But new research finds that the Arctic Ocean began transforming more than a century ago.

**New York Times:** [Climate change is driving some albatrosses to "divorce," study finds](#)

Warming oceans are sending the monogamous sea birds farther afield to find food, putting stress on their breeding. Albatross “divorces” (the technical term) are typically rare, but rising temperatures have led to a worrisome increase, forecasting concerning trends for seabird populations in general.

*Mongabay:* [Questions over who gets the billions pledged to Indigenous causes at COP26](#)

State, private, and philanthropic organizations pledged billions of dollars for Indigenous land tenure and forest management during the COP26 climate summit earlier this month. And while the commitments have been largely welcomed, observers say little of this money is actually destined for organizations and entities led by Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs).

## **REGIONAL NEWS**

*IndyStar:* [“More urgent than ever”: Indiana lawmaker to propose maternal mortality legislation](#)

Democratic Rep. and retired obstetrician Rita Fleming plans to propose a bill that requires hospitals to provide access to long-term contraception to mothers who have recently delivered. Studies have shown that women who become pregnant again within a year after delivering a child have a higher risk of a poor outcome, said Fleming, who has proposed similar legislation in past years.

*Indiana Department of Health:* [Indiana department of health partners with Purdue University on effort to ensure more equitable access to health services](#)

The two-year Indiana Healthy Opportunities for People Everywhere, funded by a \$34.8 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), will examine risk factors for chronic disease, food insecurity, opioids, obesity and smoking as well as the impact of COVID-19 on these issues. Teams deployed by Purdue Healthcare Advisors at the Regenstrief Center for Healthcare Engineering will collaborate with I-HOPE partners working on projects statewide.

## **OPINION AND ANALYSIS**

*Scientific American:* [Climate pledges still not enough to keep warming below 2-degree limit](#)

A recent study in Nature Climate Change finds that even if nations around the world live up to their climate promises, the planet will still likely warm by more than 2 degrees Celsius. The study centers on the formal carbon-cutting pledges that world nations have made under the Paris Agreement.

*DW:* [Fact check: Is nuclear energy good for the climate?](#)

Nuclear power plants are about four times as expensive as wind or solar and take five times as long to build, which is why experts do not currently consider it as one of the key global solutions to climate change. A combination of excessive costs, environmental consequences, and lack of public support are all arguments against nuclear power.

*Vox:* [It’s time to stop demonizing “invasive” species](#)

Countless species around the world—from white-tailed deer to lobsters to armadillos to maple trees—are being forced to move with the climate. Yet the term “invasive species” is

a concept so ingrained in American consciousness that it's taken on a life of its own, coloring the way we judge the health of ecosystems and neatly dividing life on Earth into native and invasive.

*Education Week:* [Science denial in the classroom: What causes it? How should teachers respond?](#)

Educators have long assumed that if they could only give students the right science knowledge in the right way, they would improve both K-12 students' understanding of science and, by extension, public understanding of science. But that approach might have ignored the extent to which Americans' very attitudes and dispositions toward science are shaped by personal beliefs and networks, by cognitive misperceptions, and by a fundamental lack of understanding of how scientific knowledge develops.

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

*The Journalist's Resource:* [Covering scientific consensus: What to avoid and how to get it right](#)

Journalists often fail to point out when there's broad expert agreement on the policy questions they're covering. Audiences need that information. A tip sheet offers advice on what to avoid when covering scientific consensus—and how to get it right.

*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 and biology sophomore Rose Schnabel, an aspiring science writer. 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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