**Sharon Delgado: Whom can we trust about climate change?**

There has been a lively debate in the opinion pages of The Union since Congressional Rep. Doug LaMalfa caused a stir by denying the reality of anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change at a local town hall meeting.

Several well-reasoned opinion pieces have documented the scientific consensus that accelerating climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions is upon us.

Others have refuted mainstream climate science, called climate change a “hoax,” and accused the United Nations and the National Academy of Science of engaging in a conspiracy to delude the public into believing that the planet is warming. How can people make sense of such a debate? Whom can we trust about climate change?

The scientific basis of climate change is clear. Any 12-year-old can create a science fair display proving the greenhouse effect. As carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions rise, so do temperatures.

Globally, greenhouse gas emissions are accelerating. Meanwhile, average temperatures are rising. The hottest year so far was 2014, but is being surpassed this year, 2015.

All the world’s major scientific institutions agree that anthropogenic climate change is real, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and all national scientific academies. Even the conservative World Bank has published an urgent report: “Why a 4 degree warmer world must be avoided.”

Meanwhile, a relative handful of self-proclaimed experts make varied and contradictory claims: That there is no global warming, or that humans are not causing these “normal” variations, or that CO2 will help plants grow, or that there’s nothing we can do about it anyway. What is behind these claims?

The Nevada Theatre, SYRCL, and the Nevada County Climate Change Coalition recently presented the film “Merchants of Doubt,” which details the funding of climate change denial by the fossil fuel industry and free-market think tanks like the Heartland Institute, which write position papers and provide “experts” to debate actual climate scientists on TV. The film is available online.

Lately we have seen the debate between those who accept mainstream climate science and those who reject it played out on the editorial pages of The Union.

For instance, Norm Sauer called Michael Mann’s famous hockey stick graph, which shows global temperatures spiking upward, a “documented hoax.” However, a simple Internet search of Mr. Sauer’s sources fail to document any such thing: “McIntyre and McKitrick’s assiduous studies” are strongly disputed. Neither of them are climate scientists.

Stephen McIntyre works in mining, has ties to the fossil fuels industry, speaks at the Heartland Institute, and runs the denialist Climate Audit blog. Ross McKitrick is an economist and is on the board of the Cornwall Institute, a Religious Right think tank that rejects both evolution and global warming.

Similarly, Baliuna and Soon’s report contesting the hockey stick and claiming that the Medieval Warm Period was a worldwide phenomenon, was discredited when authors of some of the 200 articles upon which it was based claimed that their findings had been misrepresented. Report author Willie Soon is a “climate contrarian” who has received over $1 million from fossil fuels companies. See [realclimate.org](http://www.realclimate.org/), “climate science by climate scientists” or [skepticalscience.org](http://www.skepticalscience.org/) for clarity on these or other issues related to climate science.

I could go on.

The problem is that those who reject mainstream climate science do not have to hold to scientific (or even intellectual) rigor when presenting their views. They only have to sow doubt. This creates enough confusion to stop action on climate change. To further confuse us all, The Union went outside its own parameters to print Sauer’s article, complete with graphs to “prove” his points. Is his position that of The Union Editorial Board as a whole?

The statement following his article assured us that, “His opinion is his own and does not reflect the viewpoint of The Union or its editorial board.” However, this does not ring true when followed by the words: “Write to him at EditBoard@TheUnion.com.”

I urge The Union to investigate the truth and take an informed position on climate change. Please include stories, facts, and examples in relevant news stories, in addition to publishing opinion pieces.

This won’t be easy if board members disagree, but that is part of the work of journalism. A responsible newspaper in a free society not only provides a forum for varied opinions, but also works to discover and print the truth.

I hope that our conversations about climate change in these pages can progress to what we can do about it.

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