

making. It illustrates each issue with facts and examples.

Kramer accurately describes Trump's handling of the pandemic as an example of his undermining of science. Trump did in fact sideline Anthony Fauci and Deborah Birx, a well-documented fact attested to by both doctors. Moody asks, "Has there ever been a more aggressive effort to impede the spread of a virus?" Such a question is ludicrous on its face. Trump, who at one point admitted to downplaying the pandemic, was the loudest voice in the nation denying the effectiveness of masks and pushing back against social distancing.

Moody says that "most any unbiased individual would applaud Trump for seeking a variety of opinions." But seeking a variety of opinions on a scientific or medical subject shouldn't entail amplifying the opinions of those with no background or training in the area, as Trump did with Scott Atlas, a radiologist with no expertise in infectious disease, virology, epidemiology, or statistics.

Barsi claims that Kramer conflates science with "his personal preference for the

government planning of scientific research." But the story does no such thing. Kramer reports on a public issue—namely, Trump's legacy in science. He does not advocate for government funding of scientific research. Barsi accuses Kramer of imposing his views of the 2015 Paris Agreement, but the piece does not do that either. Rather, it straightforwardly reports on the fact that Trump's climate actions were not based on facts and science, thus illustrating how Trump damaged the position of science in the nation.

Certainly, COVID-19 vaccines were developed extraordinarily quickly during the Trump presidency, as Manheimer notes. But that has nothing to do with the damage Trump has done to science and the respect for science in the US, through multiple instances of his refusal to acknowledge facts and the role science must play in public policy, no matter how uncomfortable that may be. Kramer is to be congratulated for his straightforward, fact-based account of that damage.

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David Kramer's powerful report "The undermining of science is Trump's legacy" (PHYSICS TODAY, March 2021, page 24) elicited responses like Wallace Manheimer's letter in the June 2021 issue (page 10). Manheimer complains that Kramer's story was too political, but then he launches into a highly politicized and inaccurate portrayal of Donald Trump's legacy.

The letter touts a rise in R&D funding that occurred during Trump's presidency. But that increase was the result of repeated congressional actions to reject draconian cuts that the Trump administration attempted to impose on critical R&D funding. Recall the outrageous efforts by Trump's Health and Human Services secretary Tom Price (before he was forced to resign because of corruption) to reduce the National Institutes of Health budget by almost \$6 billion through cutting funding for universities' and research institutions' overhead expenses.

With regard to the vaccine achievement that Manheimer says Trump "spearheaded," the former president's lasting legacy is unfortunately his politicization of the vaccine development process in an effort to influence the outcome of the 2020 presidential election. While heroic scientists across the US and the world were working around the clock to achieve extraordinary results with COVID-19 vaccines, Trump was busy mocking the wearing of masks, promising without any basis that the virus would disappear, and pitching ineffective and dangerous therapeutics.

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Corrections

January 2022, page 17—The report incorrectly described Earth's distance from Messier 51. It is more accurate to say that it is about 400 times as distant as the far edge of the Milky Way's disk.

January 2022, page 37—In figure 2, the legend should indicate that the blue circle represents Earth's orbit and the red circle represents Mars's. A corrected figure can be found online. **PT**

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