

FYI SCIENCE POLICY BRIEFS

Agencies start closing down science advisory committees

Following an executive order issued by President Trump in February, multiple government agencies began eliminating science advisory committees. The order, titled “Commencing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy,” calls for shutting down specific advisory committees and directs the heads of some agencies and departments to identify additional committees for termination. Whereas some federal advisory committees are created by Congress, many are nonstatutory and can be shuttered by senior agency leadership.

NOAA and the US Geological Survey are among the science agencies that have eliminated some nonstatutory advisory committees. Taking a different approach, NASA acting administrator Janet Petro directed the agency to consolidate its astrophysics, biological and physical sciences, Earth sciences, heliophysics, and planetary sciences advisory committees into a single committee, a NASA spokesperson told *FYI*.

During his first term, Trump called for the elimination of a third of all committees not required by law and attempted to cap the total number at 350. Then and now, science advocates criticized the president’s actions, noting the importance of those committees in sharing scientific expertise with government leaders. Kristie Ellickson, a senior scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists’ Center for Science and Democracy, told *FYI* that she and her colleagues are tracking not only the elimination of advisory committees but also work delays and restrictions on who gets to participate: “All of these tactics aim to silence independent scientific advice to federal agencies.” —LM

FYI (<https://aip.org/fyi>), the science policy news service of the American Institute of Physics, focuses on the intersection of policy and the physical sciences.



Climate change absent in new intel assessment

No mention is made of climate change in the US government’s 2025 Annual Threat Assessment, which was released in March by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). Prior editions frequently identified climate change as a contributor to several worrying trends. The 2024 report listed it as a major challenge for US security and predicted that worsening droughts, flooding, and extreme storms would increase state instability worldwide and exacerbate economic problems that fuel terrorism and the illicit drug trade. The latest report also does not reference water resources or air quality, topics that past editions routinely flagged as security concerns.

Asked by Senator Angus King (I-ME) about the new report’s lack of mention of climate change, ODNI director Tulsi Gabbard said, “Obviously, we’re aware of occurrences within the environment and how they may impact operations, but we’re focused on the direct threats to Americans’ safety, well-being, and security.” —JT

Kratsios confirmed as OSTP director

In a 74–25 vote on 25 March, the Senate confirmed Michael Kratsios as director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Kratsios will also co-chair the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.

Shortly after Kratsios’s confirmation, President Trump wrote a letter tasking him with revitalizing the American scientific enterprise. Evoking a letter that President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote to his science and technology adviser, Vannevar Bush, during World War II, Trump outlined three challenges for Kratsios, including securing the country’s position as the “unrivaled world leader in critical and emerging technologies—such as artificial intelligence, quantum information science, and nuclear technology.”

President Joe Biden wrote a similar letter to his OSTP director at the beginning of his administration that invoked Bush and the successes of the postwar scientific enterprise. —LM 

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