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[Home](#) > NCSE Encourages Federal Scientific Integrity

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[NCSE Encourages Federal Scientific Integrity](#) [3]

NASA officials demand Big Bang be called a "theory"; national parks selling creationist books; teachers pressured to teach creationism

NCSE recently offered its advice on ways the federal government can promote and protect scientific integrity. The comment will be considered as presidential science advisor John Holdren and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) develop regulations implementing President Obama's March 9, 2009, memorandum ordering federal agencies to "ensur[e] the highest level of integrity in all aspects of the executive branch's involvement with scientific and technological processes."

The order specifically asks the OSTP to recommend regulations protecting scientific staff from political litmus tests in hiring and firing, ensuring scientific integrity of internal processes, requiring that information used in policy-making "be subject to well-established scientific processes, including peer review where appropriate," making scientific findings publicly available, and generally "ensur[ing] the integrity of scientific and technological information and processes on which the agency relies in its decision making or otherwise uses or prepares."

NCSE's comment to the OSTP focuses on educational materials used in informal education at federal facilities, citing reports of creationist books offered for sale at Grand Canyon National Park bookstores and of a political appointee at NASA demanding that the Big Bang be called a "theory" on public websites because "it is not proven fact; it is opinion." It also expresses concern about reports of creationism being taught at schools directly administered by the federal government.

The comment concludes: "Establishing clear policies protecting the accuracy of formal and informal educational content provided by the federal government is necessary to ensure the long-term integrity of science. Such content prepares the next generation of federal scientists, and is vital to constituents as

they evaluate science-based policies. In particular, agencies should develop policies that provide for scientists and educators to peer review material and to protect potentially controversial topics from political or religious pressure."

Sources:

[Presidential Memo on Scientific Integrity: Request for Comment](#) [4]

[Memorandum for the Heads Of Executive Departments and Agencies](#) [5]

[NCSE's comments on scientific integrity regulations \(PDF\)](#) [6]

[NCSE: Renewed Concern About Creationism at Grand Canyon National Park](#) [7]

[NCSE: Creationist interference at NASA?](#) [8]

CONTACT: Robert Luhn, Director of Communications, NCSE, 510-601-7203, luhn@ncseweb.org [9]

Website: ncseweb.org [10]

[NCSE](#) [11]

[2009](#) [12]

[+ read](#) [3]

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Links

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[2] <https://ncse.com/users/robert-luhn>

[3] <https://ncse.com/news/2016/06/ncse-encourages-federal-scientific-integrity-0018209>

[4] <http://blog.ostp.gov/2009/04/22/presidential-memo-on-scientific-integrity-request-for-comment>

[5]

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Memorandum-for-the-Heads-of-Executive-Departments-and-Agencies-3-9-09

[6] http://ncseweb.org/files/OSTP_letterhead.pdf

[7] <http://ncseweb.org/rncse/27/3-4/renewed-concern-creationism-at-grand-canyon-national-park>

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