Catalyst

Volume 25, Summer 2025

"Double Danger Season" Is Here

The impacts of summer without science

Do We Need New Nuclear Weapon Materials?

Public Health Under RFK, Jr.

Union of Concerned Scientists

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EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
Abby Figueroa

MANAGING EDITOR
Bryan Wadsworth

EDITOR
Pamela Worth

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Heather Tuttle

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Seth Michaels
Michelle Rama-Poccia
Eric Schulz
Claudia Ward-de León

LAYOUT & DESIGN
Cynthia DeRocco

ART DIRECTOR
Ryan Fleischer

CONTRIBUTING DESIGNERS
Bill Cotter
Nick Davis-Iannaco
Omari Spears

FRONT COVER
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CHAIR
Anne R. Kapuscinski

PRESIDENT
Gretchen T. Goldman

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
Two Brattle Square
Cambridge, MA 02138-3780

PHONE
(617) 547-5552

EMAIL
ucs@ucs.org

WEB
www.ucs.org

ON THE COVER: A sign melted by the North Complex Fire in California during 2020's Danger Season. See p. 6 to learn how the Trump administration's actions will affect this and future Danger Seasons.

The Consequences of Undoing Federal Science

Gretchen Goldman speaks at the Rally to Save NOAA (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) alongside members of Congress while Trump administration officials attended an annual event sponsored by the agency on June 4 in Washington, DC.

By Gretchen Goldman

When I was in college, I spent a summer interning with the Environmental Protection Agency. The federal scientists I shared a lab with were passionate about their work studying pollution and improving health outcomes for real people. They were proud to serve the public. I was drawn not only to the work, but also to the idea that scientists could use their training and expertise to help improve lives—a principle that has guided me through my career.

I had the privilege to be part of the federal scientific enterprise again years later, when I served in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the US Department of Transportation. I met so many talented people from all walks of life, who rarely received public credit for the long hours and hard work they put into their days serving our nation.

Federal scientists keep our air and water clean, develop new medical treatments and therapies, and make sure our workplaces, roadways, skies, food, medicine, and baby products are safe. Outside of agencies, federal investments in science at universities, hospitals, and other research institutions have yielded countless breakthroughs and discoveries that improve people's lives.

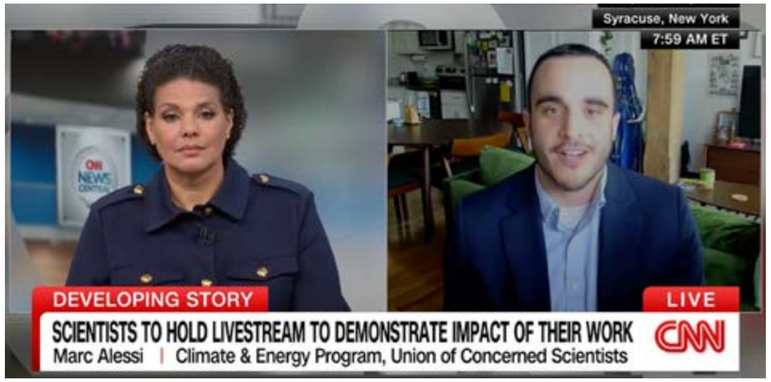
That combination of federal science housed within agencies and funding for outside research has made the United States a world leader in science, technology, and medicine. Yet, we are now watching, in real time, as our nation shoots itself in the foot when it comes to our leadership in science—and consequently, people's well-being and safety are at risk.

The Trump administration is doing everything it can to destroy a scientific enterprise that other nations have only dreamed of. It is indiscriminately smashing agency science and slashing congressionally approved funding for research institutions. It's putting the entire US population at risk from contaminated food and medicine; dangerous pollutants in our air, water, and soil; unsafe transportation, including air travel; and hazardous weather events without reliable, early warnings.

(continued on p. 21)

Photo: Jainey Bavishi

UCS ON THE RECORD . . . AND HAVING AN IMPACT



"[T]his livestream is basically an opportunity for scientists to show how these cuts to our research really damage our ability to do climate science and weather prediction."

MARC ALESSI *(above right), UCS science fellow, on his participation in a 100-hour marathon YouTube livestream. Alessi—quoted here on CNN—and other scientists spoke about the value of publicly funded research by federal agencies, answered questions, and explained their work to an audience of thousands.*

"Science and research are critical to maintaining public lands. If we lose a few months—a few years—of science and science-led management of those natural resources, it could take decades and generations for ecosystems to recover if they're poorly managed."

JENNIFER JONES*, program director of the Center for Science and Democracy at UCS, quoted in* High Country News *on the Trump administration slashing budgets and staff at agencies like the US Forest Service*

"It's as if we're in the Dark Ages."

RACHEL CLEETUS*, senior policy director of the UCS Climate and Energy Program, earned the* New York Times' *quote of the day for May 20, 2025, on how the Trump administration is limiting access to federal information about climate change*

"Allegations linking ExxonMobil to the fruits of a hacking scheme targeting UCS and other organizations, alongside the fossil fuel industry's public and private efforts to thwart climate accountability lawsuits, underscore these corporations' recognition of the very real threat that legal accountability poses to their current business models."

FELICIA JACKSON*, of* Forbes *magazine, in a story covering the UCS report* Decades of Deceit*, which details the many strategies the fossil fuel industry has employed to avoid taking action on—or responsibility for—climate change*

Video still: CNN

[FEATURES]

[ALSO IN THIS ISSUE]

INTEGRATING ELECTRIC VEHICLES INTO CALIFORNIA'S GRID COULD SAVE THE STATE **BETWEEN $1.8 BILLION AND $11.7 BILLION PER YEAR IN 2045.**

Electric Vehicles Plugged into the Grid Can Save Billions

As California has committed to electrifying the cars and trucks on its roads and using more renewable energy, analysts at the Union of Concerned Scientists are studying the potential cost-saving benefits of integrating electric vehicles (EVs) into the state's power grid. This includes managing how and when EVs are charged, and how energy stored in EV batteries can be used to send energy back to the grid (a process known as bidirectional charging).

UCS partnered with Evolved Energy Research to create an analysis, *Harnessing the Power of Electric Vehicles*, that found integrating EVs into California's grid could save the state between $1.8 billion and $11.7 billion per year—or up to 5 percent of total system costs—in 2045.

Vehicle-to-grid integration practices reduce peak demand on the electricity system, in turn reducing the need for costly upgrades to the grid. Choosing to charge an EV at times of the day when renewable energy is supplying much of the electricity mix also reduces system costs. And choosing to send electricity back to the grid from an EV battery during periods of higher demand saves money by reducing the need to build and use fossil fuel–generated electricity sources and bulk energy storage.

Many EV manufacturers offer models that, with the right equipment, could allow drivers to power an entire home or business in a blackout. The larger batteries in pickup trucks, for example, can provide enough energy for multiple days of full household power. And in the event of a heat wave or other stressor on local power grids, EV owners could return power to the grid with minimal wear and tear on their batteries.

Last year, a new California law (Senate Bill 59) co-sponsored by UCS gave explicit authority to the state energy commission to require that certain EVs sold in California come equipped with bidirectional charging capability, which makes it possible for EV owners to send their car's energy to the grid. This law expands the possibilities for vehicle-to-grid integration. Learn more about its benefits and read our recommendations for state policymakers at www.ucs.org/sum25-EVs.

Photo: Maskot/Getty Images

UCS Wins Maine's Approval of 100% Clean Electricity

A new Maine law signed by Governor Janet Mills in June sets up the state to source all of its power from the wind, sun, and other carbon-free electricity sources by 2040. UCS analysts and campaigners have been working in Maine for years to help reduce health- and climate-harming emissions, lower energy costs for consumers, and create new jobs by adopting stronger clean energy policies.

To help inform this legislation, our analysts testified at state hearings and provided legislators and other stakeholders with examples of best practices from other states. Our campaign staff raised public awareness and support for the bill with a lobby day at the Maine state house, organized local UCS supporters to urge their legislators to pass the bill, and signed onto a letter with coalition partners. "This victory shows that in the face of the relentless assaults on clean energy at the federal level, UCS can continue to make progress in states," says UCS Director of Energy Research Steve Clemmer, who lives and works in Maine.

UCS Earns Highest Rankings from Multiple Charity Watchdogs

UCS has again received top ratings from major independent charity evaluators for our effective governance, financial transparency, and high standards for accountability. Because we are funded by individual donors and foundations, and do not accept corporate or government grants, UCS has been able to maintain its strong commitment to scientific independence for more than 55 years.

The **Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance** provided UCS with accreditation for meeting 20 charity standards, including board oversight, finances, and results reporting.

Candid (formerly Guidestar), which provides comprehensive data and insights into the social sector, awarded UCS a Platinum Transparency Seal for 2025, a designation only awarded to the top 15 percent of participating nonprofits.

Charity Navigator has recognized UCS as a "Four-Star Charity" for seven consecutive years, with a 99 percent score in the past year. Four stars is Charity Navigator's highest rating; only 60 nonprofits out of more than 200,000 have achieved a score of 96 percent or higher.

CharityWatch gave UCS an "A" rating based on in-depth evaluations of the organization's financial reporting, including audited financial statements, tax forms, annual reports, state filings, and other documents.

And finally, UCS is a vetted **EarthShare Nonprofit Partner** thanks to our commitment to financial transparency and demonstration of impact to our donors.

For more information on how UCS deploys its resources responsibly, please refer to our annual report and tax forms (online at www.ucs.org/sum25-financials), and/or reach out to us at member@ucs.org or 800-666-8276.

Photo: Janine Lamontagne/iStock/Getty Images

Free for Supporters: Weekly Mindfulness Sessions

In this time of heightened uncertainty, political pressure, and burnout, UCS and our partners at the Environmental Protection Network have launched MindLab, a weekly mindfulness space designed to support the well-being of scientists and those who advance science. MindLab offers practical, science-based techniques to help scientists and science advocates manage stress, regulate emotions, and navigate uncertainty with greater clarity and calm.

Each 30-minute session will include a quick dive into the science of mindfulness; a short, guided mindfulness practice; and Q&A if time allows. Sessions are organized by Dr. Lena Adams Kim, who spent more than 15 years working for the Environmental Protection Agency and has a PhD in educational psychology.

These sessions are open to all scientists, public servants, and science supporters. You do not need to attend every session in order to register. Sessions are every Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time through the end of October 2025. Register at www.ucs.org/sum25-mindfulness.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW THIS DANGER SEASON

(AND BEYOND)

How is the Trump administration affecting Danger Season 2025? What can you do to protect yourself and your community? How do we begin to lessen the dangers?

Members of the UCS climate team answer these questions and more.

We're deep into Danger Season: the months of May through October, when climate-fueled extreme heat, drought, wildfires, hurricanes, and flooding are at their peak in the United States, and increasingly likely to coincide. We're also in the midst of the Trump administration's unrelenting assault on science, federal agencies, and measures that protect people's health and safety.

Budget and staffing cuts to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) risk degrading forecasts that people rely on for lifesaving information. The administration is undermining the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the nation's disaster response and recovery agency, by cutting its staff, budgets, and resilience programs, and shifting the burden of responding to major disasters to states and local jurisdictions that lack the resources to cope with catastrophic disasters. And cuts at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have left communities—especially those with the fewest resources—at heightened risk.

You could call it a "double Danger Season" this year.

On the pages that follow, the UCS climate scientists and experts listed to the right lay out the human toll of a Danger Season with severely reduced federal expertise and assistance.

Photo behind postcard: MICHELANGELOBOY/Getty Images. Postcard photos, L to R, top to bottom, all via Unsplash: NASA; John Middelkoop; Malachi Brooks; Ricardo Gomez Angel; Nikolas Noonan; Marcus Kauffman; Kelly Sikkema; Nicolas Houdayer; Adam Kring; Library of Congress; Wade Austin Ellis; Caleb Cook; Brian Mcgowan; JD Designs; Karsten-Winegeart (background). Headshots, top to bottom: Colorado State University; Tara Rice; Ja-Rei Wang/UCS; California Governor's Office; Shana Udvardy

OUR EXPERTS

MARC ALESSI
Science Fellow, Climate Attribution Science

RACHEL CLEETUS
Senior Director of Policy for Climate and Energy

JUAN DECLET-BARRETO
Bilingual Senior Scientist for Climate Vulnerability

AMANDA FENCL
Director of Climate Science

SHANA UDVARDY
Senior Climate Resilience Policy Analyst

DANGER SEASON 2025

Which Trump administration actions have created the most risk to people's lives and safety this Danger Season?

MARC ALESSI: Budget and staffing cuts by the Trump administration are attacks on NOAA's ability to observe our atmosphere. Weather balloon launches from multiple National Weather Service (NWS, which is part of NOAA) offices have been reduced, meaning that we have diminished capability to observe what's going on in the upper atmosphere in a timely fashion. If we don't know what's going on in the upper atmosphere, weather models won't be able to correctly predict what will happen at the surface.

I will say this: all these cuts have made people more aware of how necessary NOAA and the NWS are in protecting lives and livelihoods. People around the nation—including UCS supporters—have been calling on Congress to stop the Trump administration's harmful attacks on the crucial missions of these agencies.

With scientists being expelled from the federal government, how are decisionmakers making policies?

JUAN DECLET-BARRETO: They're making decisions without the best available science on climate and extreme weather. As the gaps in collecting, modeling, and disseminating climate and weather data continue, they may be forced to make some decisions without *any* data.

AMANDA FENCL: While some states like California may have robust scientific enterprises that can provide a backstop, they are by no means a replacement for the expert federal scientific infrastructure being dismantled part by part. Beyond public decisionmakers, many companies *also* rely on federal climate and weather services. Everyone is worse off right now.

Photos, left to right: Maranie R. Staab/Getty Images; Mario Tama/Getty Images; Brandon Bell/Getty Images

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

Looking back, this August marks the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, when high fatalities and a mismanaged recovery exposed flaws and inequities in federal systems. What have we learned in the years since about disaster recovery?

RACHEL CLEETUS: Unfortunately, not nearly enough. Hurricane Katrina's horrific death toll, steep economic damage, and painful long-term harms to people's mental health remain a sobering testament to all the ways communities were failed and how unjustly the burden fell on low-income and Black communities particularly. Frontline communities on the Gulf Coast were and remain at the forefront of rebuilding and advocating for solutions that work, including the efforts of Taproot Earth, the Louisiana Just Recovery Network, and the United Houma Nation.

As a nation, we still struggle to safely and quickly evacuate people in the face of disasters, leaving most to muddle through on their own. Long-standing racial and economic inequities mean that people in poorer Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities are still more likely to bear an inequitable burden from disasters and struggle to recover post-disaster. Katrina also showed the limits of hard infrastructure like levees in providing protection—and the need to keep upgrading critical infrastructure and invest in nature-based solutions.

As climate change has worsened, millions of people are now displaced from their homes and communities annually due to extreme disasters, as happened with Katrina—some of them permanently. And we still don't have adequate programs and investments to help those displaced or to boost resources in the communities that take in people fleeing disaster.

Photo: Mark Wilson/Getty Images

What might Danger Season feel like in 20 years?

JUAN DECLET-BARRETO: It may be hard to hear, but I think in 20 years there may not be a distinction between Danger Season and the rest of the year in terms of weather extremes. Outside of Danger Season, we are already seeing other kinds of frequent extreme weather like spring flooding and winter storms. And if we look around the world, it is Danger Season all year, somewhere.

AMANDA FENCL: A lot of the extreme events that Danger Season tracks are worse in the summer, but already present year-round in some parts of the country. In California, we experience dangerous fire weather throughout the year depending on local conditions, like the devastating Los Angeles fires in January 2025. We are already not safe, and the budget cuts are putting lives at risk. Unless we take urgent action—like restoring agencies' lifesaving services—the climate crisis will keep making us less safe.

What will be the impact of the Trump administration's cuts to science, disaster recovery, and multiple federal agencies on Danger Season in the years to come? And what is our vision for the post-Trump future?

JUAN DECLET-BARRETO: In the mid- and long-term future, we'll have troubling capacity gaps, as we may be missing out on a whole generation of scientists whose training and funding has been cut short and cut off by this administration's anti-science agenda. With that in mind, we need to invest in—and restore and improve upon—the vast federal scientific weather and climate enterprise to meet current and future climate moments. And we will need to do a better job of making sure these are bedrock functions and services that cannot be taken away by the whim of any president.

RACHEL CLEETUS: I think this authoritarian, destructive regime has reminded us that science, and the work we do to address climate change, cannot thrive when democracy itself is threatened. We have to first put our shoulder to the job of restoring the law, the institutions, the freedoms that form the bedrock of our nation. We have to acknowledge the naked racism and xenophobia that fuels this current administration and work to heal those wounds. And let's not ever let the fossil fuel industry and its lackeys again dictate the choices we know we need to make to limit the worst of the climate crisis.

Personally, it's more of a steely determination than hope that keeps me going. With the stakes this high for people and the planet now and in the future, I don't think we get to give up, no matter how difficult it may seem. Together, we can still save a lot, and it is all worth saving.

FEMA UNDER THREAT

What should people do if they are no longer able to count on the federal government for disaster recovery?

SHANA UDVARDY: Please keep calling your members of Congress. Demand that they act to protect their constituents by investing in preparedness and resilience and fully funding disaster relief and recovery.

Ask them to hold oversight hearings to get answers from the Trump administration on the impacts of cuts to NOAA, FEMA, HUD, and the EPA. Ask them to hold field hearings so disaster survivors can share their important stories. Ask them to hold fossil fuel companies accountable for reaping profits while causing mounting climate damage and spreading disinformation about climate science.

And if disaster strikes, make sure you and your family and pets are prepared for whatever type of extreme weather, climate change–related event, or natural hazard might come your way. This includes preparing a "go bag" or emergency kit; FEMA has recommendations on what to include (see www.ready.gov). Individuals and families should have food and travel money set aside if possible. Know your evacuation route. Be in touch with your local and state representatives and make sure they have plans for when smaller to midsize disasters hit to provide you and your neighbors with the necessary response and recovery resources. Share this information with your relatives and neighbors.

How much federal assistance is available after a disaster depends on Congress and the president. Given the Trump administration's recent actions, it's likely that only very large, catastrophic disasters will be covered under the disaster declaration process, leaving many communities behind.

However, FEMA isn't the only agency that provides assistance after a disaster; you might also check with the Small Business Administration and HUD as well as your local and state government emergency agencies.

If it were up to you to lead the restoration of FEMA's response and preparedness efforts, what measures would you implement?

SHANA UDVARDY: I would reverse FEMA cuts and firings by the Trump administration. I would return FEMA to its former status as a cabinet-level agency (it is currently under the Department of Homeland Security, meaning it is less empowered to act independently).

I would establish a one-stop application for disaster assistance to help survivors overcome the bureaucratic barriers to funding resources. I would reform the National Flood Insurance Program to ensure flood mapping shows the true flood risk, including sea level rise; provide an affordable flood insurance program; and add more funding to reduce risk. And I would invest broadly in resilience funding and incentives, informed by science. {C}

UCS IS CONTINUALLY MONITORING THE EFFECTS OF DANGER SEASON ACROSS THE COUNTRY. SEE THE LATEST THREATS IN YOUR AREA USING OUR INTERACTIVE MAP: **WWW.UCS.ORG/SUM25-DANGER-SEASON**

Photos, L to R: Brett Coomer/Houston Chronicle/AP Images; Yi-Chin Lee/Houston Chronicle/AP Images; Phyllis Yale (Tucker Taft); Maki Nakamura/Getty Images (ad)

He's "All-In" on UCS: Meet National Advisory Board Member Tucker Taft

Tucker Taft doesn't do anything by half measures. He began learning programming languages in the early days of computing, and then designed several of his own. When he joined a choral group in Boston, he eventually became its president. And in the decades he's supported the Union of Concerned Scientists, he progressed from sending the occasional donation to joining the National Advisory Board, a group of dedicated UCS advocates who help build philanthropic, scientific, and political power by bringing together diverse partners to expand the organization's reach and effectiveness.

"I've gotten to know many of the people at UCS. And that makes a big difference to me," says Taft. "I really enjoy being part of the process."

In his role on the National Advisory Board, Taft interacts regularly with UCS scientists, who he says impress him deeply with their thorough understanding of the issues they work on, and their deep dives into topics that are often rife with disinformation.

"I'm awed by their level of sophistication and knowledge," he says. "For example, when there's a narrative in the news or blogosphere about the 'need' to replace all US nuclear warheads, UCS can point to the data and evidence that refute these claims. They investigate these issues and come up with well-researched and robust counternarratives."

Taft also cares deeply about climate change and the role of science in functioning democracies. During the first Trump administration, when progress at the federal level became very difficult, he was drawn in by UCS pragmatism as the organization pivoted to making progress with more regional approaches. During the Biden administration, he appreciated how UCS scientists advised states, local agencies, and partner organizations on how to direct investments they received from federal climate legislation to fund effective, equitable initiatives. Now, he believes that UCS is uniquely positioned to unite the scientific community against attacks from the second Trump administration.

"UCS staff scientists are at the top of their fields, and they're politically savvy. They understand that it doesn't help to just rail about how bad things are. It's about defending science and preserving what's been accomplished. With so many scientists on staff and more than 18,000 in the Science Network—mission-driven people who want to make a difference—UCS is well suited to do that," he says.

Taft, a computer scientist, is among the first generation of programmers. As

an expert in an area of computer science he describes as a "niche of a niche," he says it was important for him to diversify his interests and maintain connections outside of his work—advice he wishes to pass along to early-career scientists.

"A key to my happiness has been making connections with other people," he says. "When opportunities presented themselves to me, I offered to help, to be on boards of directors or advisory boards. I tried to get to know the people who were running the organizations I supported. And my network has now become wonderfully wide." {C}

THE PROBLEMS WITH PLUTONIUM PITS

They're the explosive core of nuclear weapons. And the government wants to build new ones despite the many reasons why we shouldn't do it.

BY BRYAN WADSWORTH

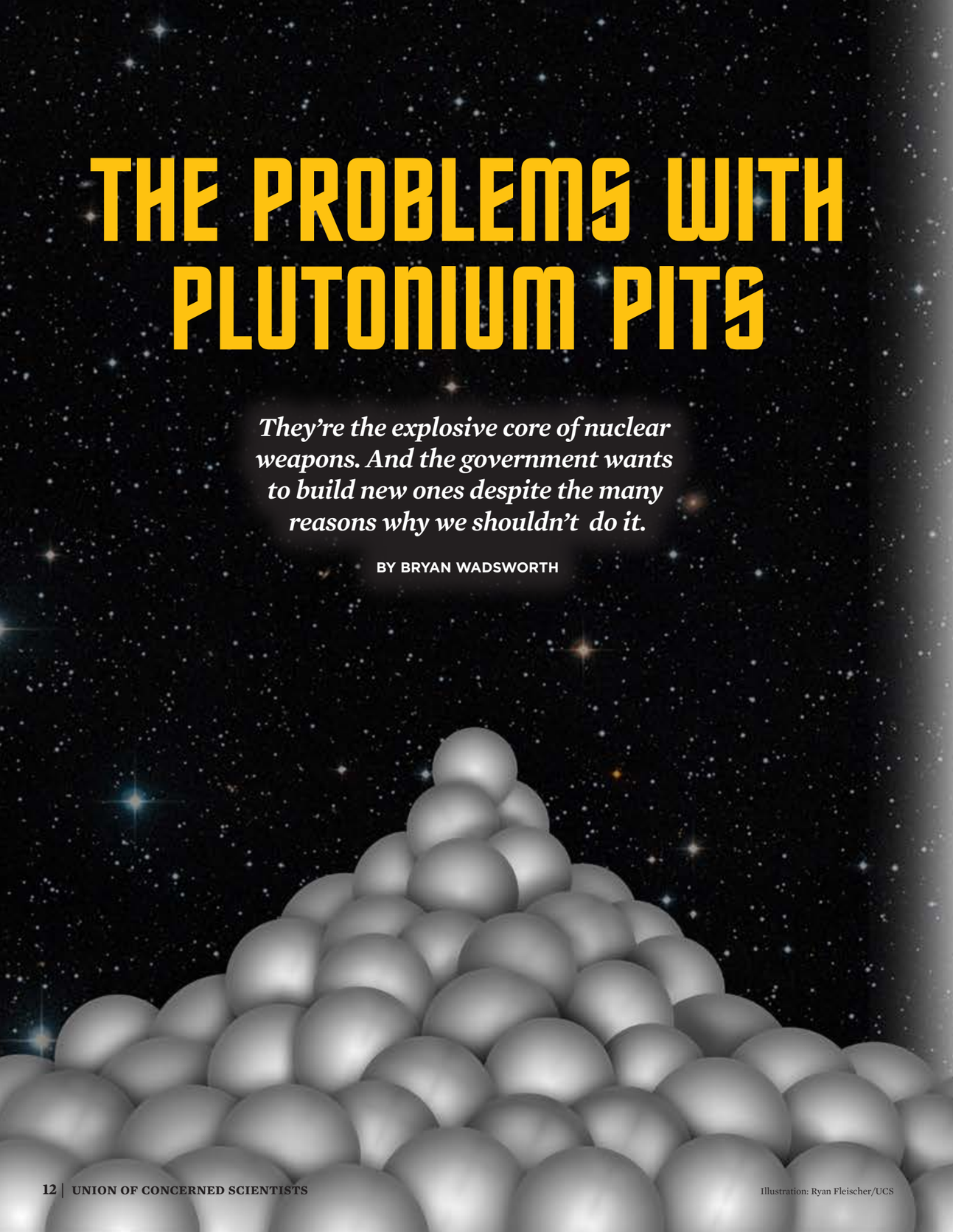


Illustration: Ryan Fleischer/UCS

Inside every thermonuclear warhead—the destructive heart of the most deadly weapons ever invented by humankind—is a critical but innocuous-looking component: a hollow metal sphere about the size and weight of a grapefruit, but made of plutonium. When compressed by conventional explosives around it, the plutonium undergoes a rapid chain reaction that leads to an even larger explosion, capable of leveling an entire city and spreading radioactive fallout over a much wider area.

The United States has not mass-produced these plutonium "pits" since 1989, when the federal government was forced to halt work at its Rocky Flats Plant in Colorado due to radiation contamination. Now, however, the government is moving ahead with a plan to replace the entire US nuclear arsenal (including new plutonium pits for new warheads), at a cost of *more than $1 trillion*.

The new Union of Concerned Scientists report *Plutonium Pit Production* (online at www.ucs.org/sum25-plutonium-pits) shows that building a new generation of pits is not only unnecessary but also risky to the health of workers and communities, and to our national security. Triggering a new arms race would make the United States less safe.

AN UNREALISTIC AND UNNECESSARY PLAN

By order of Congress in 2015, the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has been charged with building 80 new plutonium pits per year by 2030. Yet the NNSA itself has said this goal is unachievable and, despite round-the-clock work, has managed to produce only *one* pit certified for use.

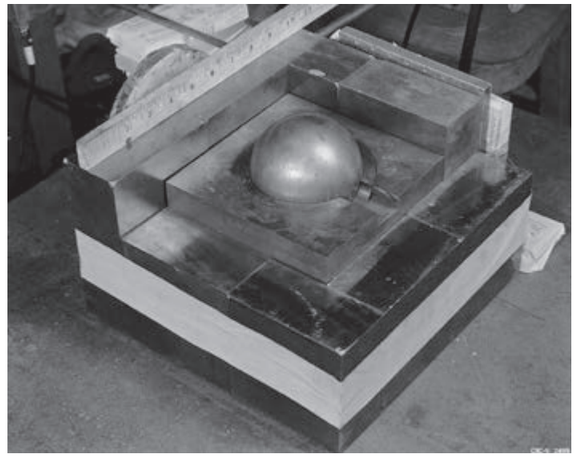
The cost of constructing the Savannah River Site in South Carolina—one of two facilities where pits will be manufactured, along with Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico—has already surpassed $25 billion and the facility is still likely a decade away from producing its first pit. There is no official cost estimate for the pit production enterprise, and Congress has failed to require one. This lack of oversight is disturbing considering that all previous attempts at reviving pit production have failed, and at enormous cost.

Scientific analysis has shown that existing plutonium pits do not need to be replaced by a new generation of pits. The plutonium in existing pits is at no risk of age-related failure that would reduce the safety, security, or reliability of the US nuclear arsenal. One study suggests the pits have a useful lifetime of at least 85 years. The national laboratories can use existing capabilities to monitor any potential effects of aging without having to mass-produce new pits.

A DANGEROUS AND DESTABILIZING PLAN

Nuclear weapons production has harmed thousands of people in the past. The mining of uranium and the processing of that ore into weapons-usable material has exposed people to radiation, resulting in a legacy of illness that continues to be felt today—especially in already overburdened communities such as the Navajo Nation, where much of the uranium was mined, and the Pueblo communities whose land became the site for Los Alamos National Laboratory, where the first nuclear weapons were developed. To a large degree, the US government has not been held accountable for this toxic legacy, and now it is creating the potential to harm additional people in New Mexico and South Carolina by rushing to mass-produce plutonium pits.

Plutonium processing is a complex and hazardous task, and the Los Alamos facility has a troubling record of recent safety violations, worker exposures, fires, and floods. Dylan Spaulding, UCS senior scientist and author of the new report, says, "In an attempt to meet a frankly unrealistic goal, the Los Alamos lab has pursued 24/7 production, hiring thousands of new and temporary workers, and cutting corners on safety. All of this increases the risk of accidents that could put workers in real danger."



A sphere of plutonium surrounded by neutron-reflective tungsten carbide blocks. This photo is from a recreation of an experiment gone fatally wrong with a plutonium pit nicknamed the "demon core" in 1945.

Photo: Los Alamos National Laboratory

SEEING STARS INSIDE NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Dylan Spaulding, author of the new report on plutonium pits, is a senior scientist in the UCS Global Security Program. His work focuses on reducing the threat posed by nuclear weapons. We asked him about what motivates his work.

What led you to your field of research, and what excites you about it?

I studied how materials behave at extremely high pressures and temperatures—conditions that not only exist within stars and planets, but also within nuclear weapons. This results in what may seem like an improbable connection between planetary geophysics and weapons design and development. Rather than focusing my effort on other worlds, I wanted to apply it to making this one safer.

Why is working at UCS a better fit for you than what you could be doing elsewhere?

Academic research can sometimes feel removed from its real-world applications. At UCS, we put science directly to work and generate real-world outcomes for a healthier and safer planet. It's gratifying to try to make change directly instead of watching from the sidelines.

Until Israel and the United States chose to attack Iran's nuclear facilities, public concern about nuclear weapons had taken a back seat to other issues. What gives you hope for progress on nuclear weapons policies?

I think everyone has been forced to reckon with insecurity and uncertainty about the rapidly shifting global landscape. When nuclear weapons are involved, they amplify these tensions. However, some of the most important arms control breakthroughs occurred during moments of historical tension. For instance, the Limited Test Ban Treaty came just one year after the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty was agreed to in 1968 when US-Soviet competition in space was at its peak. Future breakthroughs are possible, and the United States has the power and ability to lead them.

Read more from Dylan on our blog, *The Equation*, at https://blog.ucs.org

A federal court recently found the lab's assessment of its environmental impacts deficient and ordered a new assessment. The risks are not confined to the facility or the surrounding area: toxic materials must be transported across the country, and the United States' only designated repository for radioactive waste may not have the capacity to store everything that would be generated by this aggressive pit production plan.

In choosing to replace its entire nuclear arsenal—from new plutonium pits and the new warheads they will inhabit, to the new missiles, bombers, and submarines that will carry these weapons—the United States will quite possibly launch a new global arms race. This plan would also commit the United States to another century of misguided policy that gives nuclear weapons a key role in our national defense. As a history of close calls demonstrates, nuclear weapons do not make us safer. Instead, they make it possible for one instance of technical malfunction, a mistake in judgment, or the rash impulse of a commander-in-chief to result in a barrage that could wipe out hundreds of millions of people.

It doesn't have to be this way.

SAFER ALTERNATIVES EXIST

As a signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the United States is obligated to work toward nuclear disarmament. It could begin to meet this obligation by taking the step of phasing out its land-based ICBMs (intercontinental ballistic missiles). Short of that, it should avoid the expense and the many risks entailed in mass-producing plutonium pits by abandoning its unrealistic goals, scrapping the Savannah River Site, and relying on pits that already exist—including thousands in storage. Current stockpile stewardship technology is capable of giving us this assurance.

If, however, the NNSA proceeds with its plans, Congress should at the very least demand to see cost estimates and timelines before allocating any further funding to pit production, and call for studies on plutonium aging and the reuse of existing pits. The NNSA must prioritize the safety and well-being of workers and communities, and conduct transparent, robust studies of the cumulative impacts of pit production on people and the environment.

"Despite its poor history of executing large projects, the NNSA has already invested billions of dollars on this unwieldy and unnecessary program," says Spaulding. "It has thousands of existing plutonium pits in reserve and should investigate options for reuse before one more pit is produced." {C}

***Bryan Wadsworth** is managing editor at UCS.*

Photo: Megan Wygant

Richard L. Garwin, 1928–2025

His accomplishments were largely unknown to the public, but late in life he became one of the most highly decorated scientists in this country's history. Longtime Union of Concerned Scientists board member Richard L. ("Dick") Garwin passed away on May 13, 2025, at the age of 97.

In 2002 he received the United States' top honor for science and engineering, the National Medal of Science, and 14 years later he was awarded the highest nonmilitary honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Though he is frequently called the inventor of the hydrogen bomb, his interests were many, and his innovations helped advance technologies that people interact with on a daily basis.

He was only 23 when he helped make the hydrogen bomb a reality, then immediately began advising US presidents—13 of them, starting with Dwight Eisenhower—on security issues. "Dick was one of those very rare people who advised the government for decades but also prioritized taking part in the public debate on key issues and working with groups like UCS," says David Wright, former director of the UCS Global Security Program.

Even before he became a UCS board member in 2000, Garwin was an ally and contributor to the organization's work, especially our opposition to President Reagan's "Star Wars" missile defense proposal, which our research showed would not work as advertised (similar to President Trump's "Golden Dome," another costly pipe dream). He also served as a mentor to UCS scientists. "He was an invaluable colleague who was generous with his time and ideas, which I, and many others, benefited from again and again," Wright says. "His passing is a huge loss."

At a press conference convened in March 1984 by the Union of Concerned Scientists, Richard Garwin and UCS co-founder Kurt Gottfried (both holding the model) addressed the technical and strategic problems inherent to a space-based ballistic missile defense system.

A TINKERER WITH GLOBAL IMPACT

As a child in Ohio, Dick Garwin occupied himself by taking apart and reassembling household appliances, eventually graduating to studying physics under the Nobel laureate Enrico Fermi, inventor of the first nuclear reactor. In 1950, Fermi encouraged Garwin to work with him at Los Alamos National Laboratory, where the Manhattan Project physicist Edward Teller and others were working on the theory behind a "superbomb." Garwin turned the theoretical into the practical with a 1952 test 700 times more powerful than the bombs dropped on Japan. The public never learned of Garwin's role until a half-century later; he once said that if he could wave a magic wand to make the hydrogen bomb disappear, he would.

Later, Garwin chose to accept a research position at IBM, where he could work on anything of interest to him. This amazingly productive period led to the invention or refinement of touch screens, laser printers, GPS (the Global Positioning System), MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), and reconnaissance satellites, among others. He published more than 500 papers and was granted 47 patents.

At the same time, he advocated for a safer world by criticizing ineffective and wasteful military projects, and calling for reductions in nuclear arsenals, a ban on nuclear testing, and to take nuclear weapons off "hair-trigger" alert status. Just weeks before his passing, he co-authored the foreword to the new UCS report on plutonium pit production (see p. 12).

"UCS was very fortunate to have Dick co-author many of our reports," says Stephen Young, associate director of government affairs in the UCS Global Security Program. "Having him involved meant not only that you had a brilliant mind with an incomparable history in the field contributing to the discussion, but having his name associated with any project brought it an instant gravitas."

Or, as Lisbeth Gronlund, another former director of the UCS Global Security Program, puts it, "Dick's involvement inoculated us against the inevitable response that our physics calculations were irrelevant because there was classified information that we didn't know—but Dick had access to that information, and everyone knew it!"

Dick Garwin will be remembered at UCS for his willingness to help young scientists, decades of dedication to research, and unwavering commitment to a safer planet. {C}

Photo: UCS

A Clean Energy Future Can't Be Stopped

INTERVIEW WITH JULIE McNAMARA

Last year, coal's share of the US electricity mix hit a new low: just 15 percent, down from 50 percent a quarter-century ago. It's no surprise why. As a source of electricity, coal is more expensive than the alternatives, less efficient than the alternatives, responsible for significant harms to the environment and people's health—including asthma, cancer, and other debilitating conditions—and has claimed more than 100,000 US lives from the mining process alone.

But for purely political reasons, the current presidential administration is attempting to bring coal back.

We spoke with Julie McNamara, an associate policy director with the UCS Climate and Energy Program, on the country's energy future, absurdly named economic concepts, and why there is reason for hope when we are faced with an existential threat in climate change.

What is happening with the US transition to clean energy under the new administration?

JULIE McNAMARA: Let's just say it: The Trump administration has been catastrophic for clean energy progress. It is relentlessly working to boost fossil fuels and sideline clean energy. These efforts include attempting to strike—or refusing to enforce—rules meant to stop polluters, and refusing to spend previously allocated funding on clean energy projects. What the administration is doing, aided by the majority in Congress, will without question slow the transition to cleaner, safer, and more affordable energy.

And there are staggering costs associated with these actions. More toxic pollution. Higher energy bills. Loss of investments. Loss of entire new workforce opportunities. Ceding US leadership on technologies and innovation. Higher costs to tackle worsened climate impacts. The list goes on and on. It's losses and costs, losses and costs, all the way down.

Still, even with all of that, there is no doubt in my mind that a clean energy future is where we're going. The opportunity costs of all this time wasted are enormous. Enormous! But the future is clean, and I know that we are going to get there.

JULIE McNAMARA is an associate policy director with the Union of Concerned Scientists' Climate and Energy Program. Her research focuses on policies and measures that facilitate a rapid, sustained, and broadly beneficial transition of our nation's energy system to renewable resources. Read more from Julie on our blog, *The Equation*, at https://blog.ucs.org.

President Trump has promised to unleash "beautiful, clean coal." Is a so-called coal renaissance on the horizon?

JULIE McNAMARA: Unequivocally no. Which is not to say they're not trying to bring it back. There's a lot coming from President Trump and his administration that's just rhetoric, of course, but they are still taking actions that are very real—and very illegal—to ease the path for coal. Things like rolling back pollution limits on coal-fired power plants, expediting and easing permitting processes, forbidding consideration of the costs of climate change, and declaring an intention to not enforce environmental and health standards for any segment of the energy sector.

But even with all these handouts, carveouts, and prop-ups, the net change might, at most, dull the very steep curve of coal's phaseout from the US power sector. This does not a renaissance make. Whatever fraction they're able to extend the industry's lifeline, it's just a dead-cat bounce.

Dead-cat bounce? Did I hear you right?

JULIE McNAMARA: Yes, you did—with apologies to cat lovers. Dead-cat bounce is a finance term for a brief rebound, sometimes mistaken as a return to growth, during an inexorable long-term decline. As in, a dead cat can bounce when dropped from a tall height, but that doesn't mean it's alive.

Coal-fired power generation has been on a long-term decline as a share of the US electricity mix for years. The Trump administration is now intervening to attempt to prop up coal plants. It's possible we'll see a temporary plateau, as the pace of retirements may slow. But we all know where coal is going: It's on its way out.

At the same time that President Trump is claiming a coal revival, he is overseeing the slashing of health protections for coal miners, and ending investments for communities transitioning toward cleaner options.

Even after President Trump made some of these recent announcements, numerous utilities across the country indicated they're continuing apace with retiring coal plants, because it just doesn't make sense for the economy, public health, or the climate. There are cheaper and better ways to make electricity.

What do these attacks mean for the clean energy economy?

JULIE McNAMARA: Renewable resources lower electricity costs, decrease pollution, and provide local access to power generation. But the appeal is even broader. When we look to regulators, consumers, businesses, and industry, we see forward-looking entities putting an emphasis on shifting to a clean economy because of its obvious competitive advantage.

The Biden administration and the concurrent Congress passed numerous policies that invested in building out a clean energy economy. People and businesses saw increased funding for advanced manufacturing, tax credits for clean energy production, and opening pathways for community-oriented entities like schools and hospitals to opt in to clean energy generation. We have seen a surge in investment in the clean energy economy—almost unbelievable growth.

And yet, we are now seeing a rapid piling up of major projects canceled or put on hold as the Trump administration and Congress unravel these wildly successful programs. Hundreds of billions of dollars poised to flow into communities all across the country—now stopped.

What other impacts will these cuts have?

JULIE McNAMARA: At the same time that President Trump is claiming a coal revival, he is overseeing the slashing of health protections for coal miners, and ending investments for communities transitioning toward cleaner options.

Any economic transition is hard. It takes real work, real money, real time, to get from what was to what can be. And now we see President Trump abandoning that hard work and instead dangling the possibility of a future that will never come, while pulling out the rug from under real solutions.

How do we limit the fallout from the administration's actions?

JULIE McNAMARA: The good news is that the expansion of policies facilitating the buildout of a clean economy over the past few years has given more people, communities, and businesses a taste of the opportunities afforded by the clean energy transition. And people don't want to turn back to a polluting past.

Standing up and speaking out about what's at stake—the opportunities lost, the staggering costs—is the very strongest defense we have against these current attacks. For as much as the administration is wreaking havoc, it's also generating more and more pushbacks and renunciations at the federal, state, regional, and local levels.

We'll get to a clean energy future. But now, completely avoidably—and shame on everyone enabling these delays and detours—it will be at a far higher cost. {C}

Photos: Omari Spears/UCS (Julie McNamara); bugto/Getty Images (ad)

Grid Planners Can Reduce the Devastation of Power Outages

By Pamela Worth

Houston residents Karla Perez and Esperanza Gonzalez use their barbecue grill to stay warm during the widespread power outages caused by Winter Storm Uri in February 2021.

Photo: Go Nakamura/Stringer/Getty Images

Most of us don't think about how much we rely on the power grid to keep us safe—until it fails. We tend to take for granted that our lights, appliances, heat, and air conditioning will work when we flip a switch or push a button. But as climate change causes more frequent and more intense heat waves, hurricanes, and winter storms in more parts of the country, the safety, health, and lives of everyone who depends on consistent and stable power are at risk.

Between 2000 and 2020, the United States experienced a 67 percent increase in extreme weather–related outages, costing tens of billions of dollars each year. These periods without power endangered people's lives, whether from the effects of the extremely hot or cold temperatures or being unable to use medical devices.

This was the case in Texas in 2021, when a rare winter storm brought temperatures to single digits and the ensuing demand for electricity, along with frozen pipes and drained gas reserves, strained the state's power grid.

The grid operator shut off power to millions of people for days. Hundreds of people, including children, froze to death or died from carbon monoxide poisoning as gas grills and cars were turned on indoors in desperate attempts to stay warm. And through a confluence of factors—including the poor insulation of older, cheaper homes; the lack of Spanish-language information about heating centers; and no resources to pay for a night in a warm hotel—Black, Latino, low-income, and disabled Texans bore the brunt of the crisis.

It isn't difficult to imagine a similar catastrophic grid failure caused by extreme weather anywhere in the United States. The transition to a cleaner and more resilient power grid is under way, but right now our energy infrastructure is unprepared for climate change. And the communities most vulnerable to its impacts are often those that have received the fewest resources to invest in preparing.

In a new UCS report, *Keeping Everone's Lights On: How to Build an Equitable, Climate-Resilient Power Grid*, our experts offer an assessment of current risks to the US power grid and a blueprint for investing in a grid that can protect people by responding to, withstanding, and quickly recovering from extreme weather events.

As the power grid evolves to meet growing demand and enable the clean energy transition, utilities and grid planners must factor in climate change and its impacts on the grid in ways they historically didn't have to. Accounting for disparities among communities in terms of their vulnerability to extreme weather, and soliciting consumers' input, will help ensure that the most vulnerable are protected.

THE POWER GRID IS A PATCHWORK OF RESPONSIBILITY

Unlike some essential infrastructure in the United States that has been carefully engineered and planned, such as federal highways or broadband internet, electricity grids were built mostly piecemeal by individual utilities over the last century. Their planning, maintenance, and updates are managed by regional entities known as regional transmission operators or independent system operators (RTOs/ISOs), under the aegis of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and state energy regulatory bodies.

Local utilities—the names on your energy bill such as Eversource or PG&E—are responsible for proposing local projects, including connecting new power plants to the system. The grid operators, however, are typically responsible for connecting multiple utility service territories or different regions of the country.

A person walks past downed power lines in South Carolina, where more than 1.3 million electricity customers lost power as a result of Hurricane Helene in 2024.

Photo: Joe Raedle/Getty Images

But who is responsible for keeping the lights on in the face of extreme weather and climate change impacts? Neither FERC nor most state agencies are stepping up to require grid operators and utilities to factor the broad range of potential climate change and extreme weather impacts into their plans and investments. Even less prevalent are decisionmaking processes that focus on addressing current inequities among communities, or that include community input to identify the best solutions for improving system resilience. Current system planning processes largely fail to account for the full range of extreme weather events that can cause widespread, potentially dangerous outages.

> COMMUNITY INPUT CAN HELP UTILITIES IDENTIFY THE BEST SOLUTIONS FOR MAKING THE ELECTRICITY SYSTEM MORE RESILIENT.

However, grid operators have the authority, technical capability, and perspective necessary to carry out comprehensive planning that accounts for climate change and its effects on grid systems. For example, grid operators could direct funding to build up regional and interregional transmission systems—larger, high-voltage, bulk transmission lines that connect multiple utility service territories. Regional and interregional transmission provides redundancy within power systems so that no community depends on a single transmission line for electricity delivery; if extreme heat or a winter storm causes widespread outages in one area, regional and interregional transmission can deliver power from another, potentially avoiding the type of devastation Texas experienced a few years ago.

Unfortunately, in some parts of the country, grid operators have not approved investments in regional or interregional transmission over the past 10 years. Decisionmakers and grid operators have the power to change this, and to:

- better project future conditions and risks posed by the changing climate;
- identify and protect communities and populations that are most vulnerable to these emerging risks; and
- identify the appropriate investments that can cost-effectively mitigate the risks of outages to consumers.

The new UCS report *Keeping Everone's Lights On* (www.ucs.org/sum25-grid-resilience) provides numerous recommendations for grid operators and community members who want to ensure their regional grid prepares for climate change and protects its consumers. UCS also has a toolkit (www.ucs.org/sum25-utility-toolkit) for anyone who wants to learn how to engage with decisionmakers to help build a more just and inclusive electric utility system. {C}

***Pamela Worth** is senior writing manager at UCS.*

UCS Helps Restore the Voices of Scientists Who Have Been Silenced

By Seth Michaels

Members of the UCS-convened Independent Particulate Matter Review Panel, including chair Christopher Frey (left), discuss setting a new, stronger standard for a harmful pollutant while meeting in 2019.

When federal decisionmakers craft policy on technical or scientific subjects, they don't have to make those calls in the dark. Across the government, federal scientific advisory committees have traditionally brought together top experts with a variety of experiences and perspectives to make sure public policies are based on the best scientific evidence. At their best, these committees illuminate complex issues and help make policies clearer, more equitable, and more effective.

That's how it *should* work. But the Trump administration is taking a sledgehammer to the foundations of federal scientific work, including by dismantling these committees.

In an executive order issued early this year, the White House demanded that agencies across the government eliminate "elements of the Federal bureaucracy that the President has determined are unnecessary." At one agency after another, the new administrators and directors are telling experts their skills are irrelevant, their expertise will no longer shape policies, and their service is no longer welcome.

That doesn't just affect scientists who lose the chance to contribute to effective federal policies—it affects all of us whose access to clean water, innovative medical treatments, weather forecasting, and safe, healthy food is undermined when politics, not science, drives the decisions made by our government. Indeed, without good advice from a range of voices, the policies and decisions made by federal agencies could be counterproductive or harmful.

That's why the Union of Concerned Scientists is encouraging experts to strike out on their own. A new toolkit we have created empowers scientists to form their own independent advisory committees to ensure the work of dismantled federal committees continues.

A PRECEDENT EXISTS

In the absence of federal leadership, independent committees can create an opportunity for public input on critical scientific topics, help counter misinformation in the public sphere, and allow scientific progress and consensus building to continue. These committees can also provide scientific advice for decisionmakers at other levels of government and prepare recommendations for future decisionmakers when the opportunity arises.

Take one example: the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) has played a crucial role in ensuring that air pollution regulations are based on the best available science. Informed by these independent experts, stronger air pollution standards have prevented thousands of premature deaths annually, particularly among vulnerable populations.

"My hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has seen measurable air quality improvements thanks to tougher standards that were informed by scientific evidence," says Melissa Finucane, vice president for science and innovation at UCS, who co-wrote the toolkit. "In Pittsburgh, that's led to fewer emergency department visits for asthma and heart disease, and hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of improved health outcomes and economic output from regulated industries."

The first Trump administration disbanded a CASAC panel that was set to review particulate matter standards, but the work continued thanks to a self-organized independent group of scientists with relevant expertise. This independent panel was chaired by leading air pollution expert and UCS Science Network member Dr. H. Christopher Frey, and UCS helped convene its primary meeting in 2019. The independent committee delivered its recommendations on a health-protective particulate matter standard to the EPA administrator. Those recommendations informed decisionmakers in other jurisdictions, as well as the subsequent presidential administration, contributing to stronger limits on dangerous particulate matter pollution.

"The Biden administration was able to move faster in setting air pollution standards because we had done the scientific deliberation and consensus building," says UCS President Gretchen Goldman, who was part of the effort to convene the shadow panel.

Inspired by that experience, Dr. Frey helped co-create the new UCS toolkit.

Photo: Francis Chung/E&E News

In the absence of federal leadership, independent committees can create an opportunity for public input on critical scientific topics.

INDEPENDENT COMMITTEES CAN SAVE LIVES

The voices of independent scientists are all the more important as the Trump administration hands the reins of federal agencies to appointees whose ideologies and conflicts of interest could undermine public policies we all depend on. At the National Science Foundation, leaders are dismantling advisory committees as they also cut grants and cancel research. Political appointees at the EPA and the Department of the Interior are ignoring and ousting scientific experts while they weaken the rules that keep our air, water, and soil clean and open up federal lands and vital ecosystems to unimpeded fossil fuel extraction. And as my colleague Darya Minovi notes on p. 22, the Department of Health and Human Services is squelching research into real health harms while promoting disinformation and even ignoring the science on vaccination.

It's time for independent scientists to offer an alternative people can trust.

"Good science can literally save lives," Finucane says. "In times of uncertainty, when misinformation and competing interests create a fog around pressing environmental health issues, science advisory committees are like a lighthouse that points the way with the best available scientific evidence."

Although federal resources for science advisory committees are being eliminated, scientists can ensure their expertise informs policies that benefit the public good by following the Federal Advisory Committee Act's guidelines—which you can find on www.gsa.gov—in their own independent committees and implementing best practices for independence, transparency, diversity, and evaluation.

Make no mistake: the danger is real. Just as in its first term, the Trump administration is coming after scientific advisory committees because the evidence shows the folly of its proposed rollbacks to science-based policies. Those attacks are setting back the cause of public health, environmental justice, and a safer future for all of us. We all have a role to play in pushing back—and UCS's new toolkit offers one path forward.

The toolkit *Running an Independent Science Advisory Committee* can be found at www.ucs.org/sum25-committee-toolkit. {C}

***Seth Michaels** is a senior writer at UCS.*

The Consequences of Undoing Federal Science

(continued from p. 2)

It's also disrupting the pipeline of our nation's scientific workforce, derailing careers and setting back US scientific excellence by decades. As my colleague Juan Declet-Barreto says in this issue's cover story (p. 6), "We may be missing out on a whole generation of scientists whose training has been cut short and cut off by this administration's anti-science agenda."

We're already feeling the absence of their expertise. But as we fight to defend federal science and, with your help, work to save what we can, we must also look to the future beyond this administration: how will we rebuild and improve on what we've lost? That's why you'll see in this issue blueprints for a better electricity grid that serves all people (p. 18), science that can help defuse a new nuclear arms race (p. 12), and a case for hope for continued clean energy development (p. 16).

Your solidarity with scientists and your outrage at the dissolution of evidence-based policies in our nation are helping the Union of Concerned Scientists keep fighting.

Keep telling your senators and representatives in Congress that we must save science and save lives. And thank you for being part of our work in these difficult times. {C}

***Gretchen Goldman** is president of UCS. Read more from Gretchen on our blog,* The Equation, *at https://blog.ucs.org.*

Our Government Is Now a Threat to Public Health

By Darya Minovi

In this Trump era, the science of public health has taken a beating. The administration's decimation of the Environmental Protection Agency's science offices is occurring at the same time as federal research grants to institutions outside government have been halted. Agency heads are rolling back public health rules and firing staff who monitor and enforce them.

But nowhere is this attack more evident than at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

The HHS is a $100 billion department, overseeing many subagencies that support research, provide health insurance coverage, collect data, and provide information to the public. It administers Medicare and Medicaid and acts as the world's largest funder of biomedical research. But under Kennedy, it's not just being reduced in size, but completely dismantled.

Kennedy has no subject-matter expertise, only conspiracy theories. But he is worse than a crank—he is a danger to the people of the United States. He has made it his life's work to spread demonstrably false information and undercut trust in medicine. And now he's been empowered by President Trump to target the public health infrastructure we depend on.

Take, for example, the National Institutes of Health. This agency distributes more than $30 billion to researchers each year, directly supporting vital science, medical breakthroughs, and economic growth. It's the foundation on which much academic and private medical research is built. Kennedy and his allies are shattering that foundation, and the damage could be lasting. You can't just halt biomedical research for a while and flip a switch to restart it: samples go bad, data collection is missed, experts leave for other jobs and take their knowledge with them.

Furthermore, while thousands of qualified and experienced public servants received emails earlier this year telling them, "You are not fit for continued employment," thus weakening the HHS and other agencies' capacity, some of the loudest and most discredited voices in medical pseudoscience are being empowered. We've watched repeatedly how they ignore or rewrite evidence when it doesn't support their crackpot beliefs, replacing science with disinformation on issues like vaccine effectiveness, autism, and gender-affirming care.

In May, Kennedy's HHS released a report purporting to set a new direction for the agency, a report marked by methodological issues and conflicts of interest among its authors. It was riddled with misleading citations, including references to "sources" that don't exist. In June, Kennedy even dismissed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's entire scientific advisory board on vaccines, depriving the agency of the input of real experts and opening more space for his favored myths and misinformation to shape the process.

And despite Kennedy's claims about "radical transparency," he's making the department far less transparent—by weakening public participation, distorting or removing information on public-facing websites, and gutting the agency's public records office. That means less accountability for any harmful decisions made at the HHS.

As Kennedy and President Trump implement their grim vision, it's going to be harder to get accurate information about health threats and diseases. As a public health researcher, this worries me—but as the parent of a young child, it's absolutely terrifying.

Fortunately, no one is in this alone. Alongside many others, we at UCS are tracking and exposing the administration's actions. We're organizing scientists to push back on Kennedy's willful demolition of our public health system. The facts can't actually speak for themselves—you can help by speaking out locally and pressuring your members of Congress to scrutinize the HHS.

We can't afford to let the public health and science infrastructure we built over decades disappear. Lives literally depend on it. {C}

***Darya Minovi** is a senior analyst in the Center for Science and Democracy at UCS. Read more from Darya on our blog,* The Equation*, at https://blog.ucs.org.*

A protestor is removed from Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.'s Senate Finance Committee confirmation hearing for HHS Secretary.

Photo: Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images; Anthony Eyring/UCS (Darya Minovi and ad)

Union of Concerned Scientists
Two Brattle Square
Cambridge, MA 02138-3780

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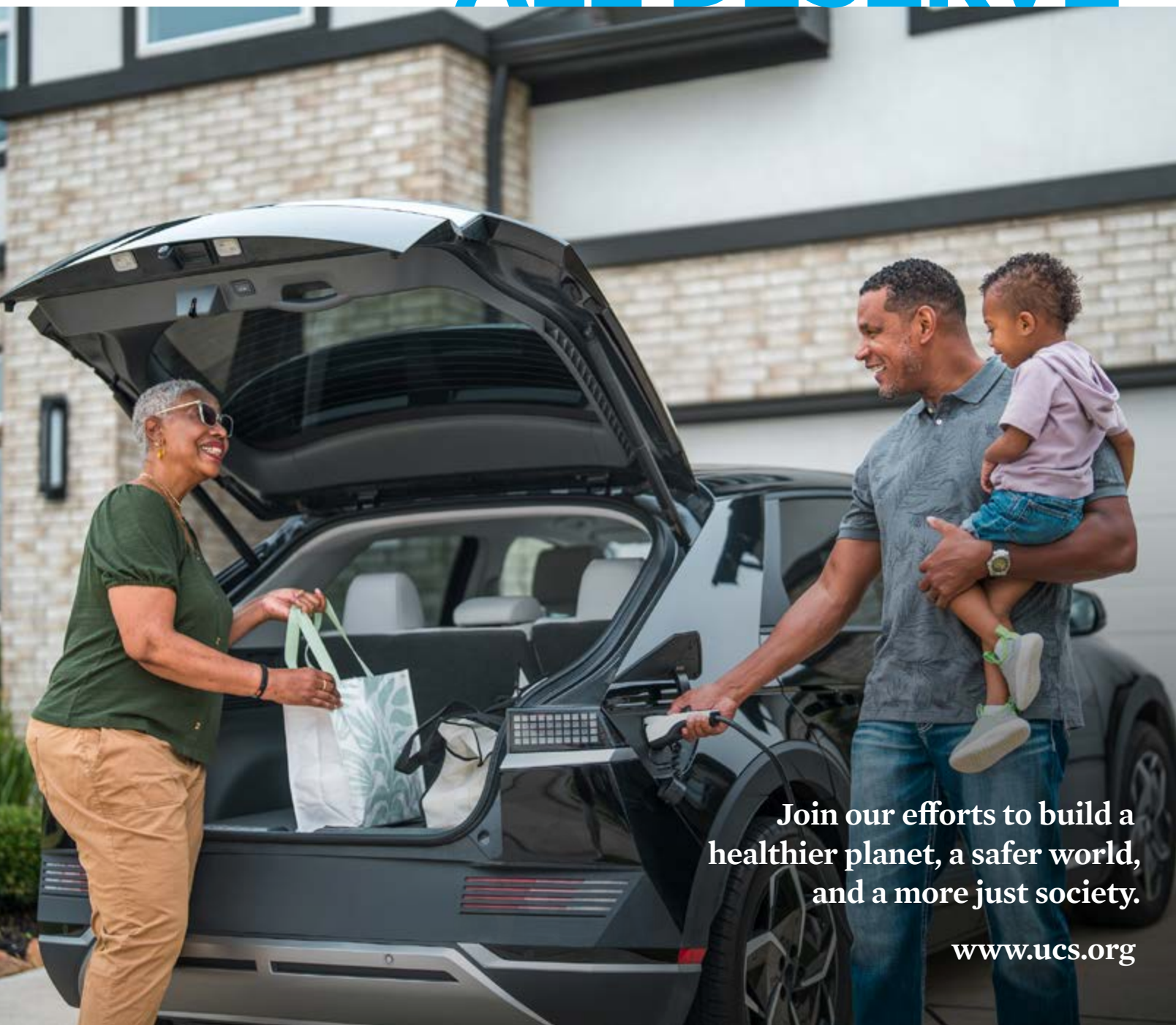

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