



August 28, 2020

Senator Elizabeth Warren
309 Hart Building, U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Warren:

In July you wrote to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and, to my shock and dismay, [asked him to censor me](#)¹ and the CO2 Coalition of climate scientists and energy economists, of which I am the executive director. At issue is an op-ed on the arcane mathematics of computerized climate models that I co-authored in 2019 with our senior fellow Patrick Michaels, a former president of the American Association of State Climatologists.

I've been struggling to find some common ground that would interest you in looking carefully at my opinions, both on the "climate disinformation" you allege and on the concept of censoring rather than debating opinions with which one disagrees. After all, we seem to share a lot, as Democrats who have run for Congress (you clearly more successfully than me), as opponents of our "endless wars" and military support for dictators, and as friends and colleagues of some great Massachusetts public servants.

I had the privilege in the 1980's of working as a congressional staffer with then-Representative Ed Markey and now-Representative Jim McGovern, assisting them in their efforts to end the civil wars in Central America. In the 1990's I ran Demilitarization for Democracy, which promoted "No Arms to Dictators" legislation that presaged your recent opposition to arming Saudi Arabia and supporting it in the civil war in Yemen.

And when the Democrats regained the House in 2007, I came back to the congressional staff as foreign policy counsel to Bill Delahunt as he chaired a Foreign Affairs subcommittee. He brilliantly transformed President Bush's attempt to sign a long-term base agreement with Iraq into, instead, an agreement withdrawing U.S. troops from yet another one of the "endless" wars you oppose.

But where I've decided we have the most in common is as people who were honored to be professors -- you in the law, me in statistics and mathematical modeling for public policy -- and who delighted in using our skills to encourage students to think critically in their analyses. I miss that experience all the time, so I am going to try to recreate it here, imagining that your letter was handed in as an assignment for the

graduate course on Quantitative Analysis in International Affairs that I taught at American University. Here's what I would have written to a student who submitted the letter:

The energy with which you pursue your argument that the CO2 Coalition should be banned from Facebook for promoting "climate denialism" is impressive, but you've violated our first rule in analysis: understand the other point of view so you can portray it accurately before questioning it.

You should have contacted the CO2 Coalition to see if you could learn anything from their view of the facts, let alone of the media characterizations and conclusions about its interaction with Facebook. (I just happen to have the director's number for you: 202-375-8212.) The Coalition website has a [specific statement](#)² countering the original news claim that Facebook made an exception for the op-ed in question because it contained "opinion."

The Coalition argues that it was the "fact-checking" group that had eagerly overstepped its bounds in censoring the piece, and that existing Facebook rules specifically exempted opinion. In the same statement, you would have gotten the Coalition's perspective on the substance of the issue:

*"About the only thing that is accurate in this opinion piece masquerading as news story is this statement: 'climate models, which are the foundation used to craft many carbon regulations.' Climate models indeed are the only thing justifying the array of mandates and subsidies for wind and solar power that are making energy prices four times as high as they should be....the UN's own reports show that **there has been no statistically significant increase in rates of sea-level rise, hurricanes, droughts, and other extreme weather** during the era since 1950, when industrial CO₂ could first have affected global temperature (see [Climate Statistics 101](#)³).... "Why do Facebook's censors go after anything we write about climate models? Because these models are the weak link in the alarmist narrative. These rough estimates based on pre-programmed warming assumptions continue to run three times too hot compared to actual temperature data." (see [On Climate Sensitivity](#)⁴)."*

Your footnoted references are used as a drunk uses lampposts: for support rather than illumination. You can't just throw in news stories and their headlines from left-leaning periodicals, blog posts by government agencies, and the titles of reports by political bodies like the UN IPCC as proof of your conclusions. It's evidence, not the mere existence of claims, that we are supposed to analyze.

For example, you write that, "The 2018 report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that human activities have already caused about 1

degree Celsius of global warming above pre-industrial levels.” [But that's wrong⁵](#): the IPCC is confident only a quarter of the 1 degree -- half of the half degree increase since 1950 -- came from human activities, rather than natural processes.

The UN acknowledges that before 1950 CO₂ emissions were too low to make a measurable impact on temperature. Even if you had cited peer-reviewed research, you would have to provide the precise claim and the evidence for it that was contained in the study. The whole point of analysis is to assess evidence, not offer appeals to the expertise and authority of the claimant.

And there is absolutely no evidence as of yet for your claim that, “The devastation caused by the climate crisis will also be disproportionately felt by communities of color...” Even if there were, we have learned here in class to do full analysis of not just the costs, but also the benefits of various policy choices. Wouldn't banning cheap, reliable energy in favor of costly, intermittent “renewables” under a “carbon neutral” Green New Deal itself badly damage communities of all colors? (Remember, there is nothing renewable about the mining and manufacturing infrastructure needed for wind turbines and solar panels and their storage batteries!)

Similarly, you worry over media reports that combined climate and economic mathematical models can be tuned to project CO₂-driven extreme weather that reduces US GDP by ten percent in 2100 – but then you leave out the tremendous, fossil-fueled increase in GDP by then that would more than pay for such damages.

You argue that Facebook should censor non-alarmist views because, “the climate crisis and environmental degradation are not matters of opinion. They are existential threats that hurt communities and economies throughout the world – including and especially Black communities and other communities of color.” But of course these claims are the essence of matters of opinion! They involve judgments that can go either positive or negative, depending on reasonable choices in analysis of the claims and counterclaims on science, economics, and health, as well as on the costs and the benefits of changing our energy mix.

Looking at the actual sources of media claims is especially needed here, given that nearly all of your references are from the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, CNN, E and E News, Heated, and Facebook's “fact-checker,” Climate Feedback.

These outlets have for years served as propagandists for climate alarmism. They uncritically repeat the press releases of any and all studies from the government climate bureaucracy and the work it funds, and even from openly alarmist lobby groups. As a matter of stated policy, they refuse to acknowledge the more complex

data and uncertainties behind the dramatic claims and projections, or even to let others do so in interviews, corrections, op-eds, or letters to the editor.

Climate Feedback, far from being an unbiased fact-checker as required by Facebook's rules, is a propaganda outlet founded and funded by climate alarmist and tech mogul Eric Michelman. He has been a leader in the campaign to silence skeptics of climate alarm. This campaign served as the dry run for today's broader cancel culture. Since the media aren't doing their job, you as a scholar have to do it for them before you can accept their characterizations.

In making your case, you seem to have forgotten our list of the three Latin enemies of logical analysis that we are pledged, as academics, never to use to confuse ourselves and our readers:

Ad hominem (about the man): attacking the person, not the evidence they provide. You do this by calling authors and groups "climate change deniers" without saying precisely what facts they are denying.

"Climate change" is an intellectually vacuous term, and in the academy we pride ourselves on clearly defining our terms. What climate changes do you have in mind? Only those caused by human actions like CO₂ emissions, or those caused by natural forces and cycles? And does "climate change" mean just average temperature, or also rates of hurricanes, droughts, and sea-level rise?

And what is the evidence for a trend you are citing, whatever the cause, and at what length of time do you think it becomes a change of state and not a typical fluctuation? If it's temperature you consider to be "climate change," as one of your paragraphs does, you'll find that the CO₂ Coalition's physicists publish papers explaining precisely how, and how much, CO₂ and methane [warm the atmosphere](#).⁶ Not much denial there!

Post hoc ergo propter hoc (after this, so therefore because of it): treating correlation as causation. For example, there is an increase in CO₂ emissions and then along comes a hurricane, flood, or wildfire, and you assume that the emissions caused it. This is an example of the most dangerous error in public policy, confusing correlation with causation. Weather is not the same thing as climate change.

You cite the 2018 Volume II of the fourth U.S. Government National Climate Assessment, "Impact, Risks, and Adaptation in the United States." This heavily-politicized document's [sloppy claims](#)⁷ about extreme weather being "climate change" contradicted the NCA's own 2017 Volume I, "Climate Science Special

Report,” which noted no upward trends in such variables as storms, floods, and fires per decade in the CO2 emissions era.

Non sequitur (it doesn't follow): the “straw man” approach of addressing something irrelevant to the matter at hand. You do this when you start arguing that “climate change” is a fact, but the op-ed in question had nothing to do with whether the climate has changed, but whether climate models were accurately capturing those changes.

As we have learned in this course, those models are dependent for their operation on thousands of estimated parameters. They are tools, not oracles, and so of course are not claiming to be true representations of the atmosphere a week, a month, let alone 100 years from now. They are simply matters of experts' opinions, and the Coalition's authors fit that bill as well as Facebook's or the UN's. Indeed, many of the Coalition's scientists were members of the UN process, but left it as it became politicized.

And you raise the hoary, irrelevant specter of fossil fuel companies “spending hundreds of millions of dollars each year to lobby against climate action.” This too is off-topic, and actually misleading to boot: these companies long ago left the policy playing field on climate change, preferring to quietly profit from whatever price level the new, distorted market may bring, and get in on “renewable” subsidies as well. Like the phony “Exxon knew” campaign of lawsuits, which was cynically based on documents misleadingly edited by climate alarmist groups and their allies in Congress, this specter will also self-destruct upon a modicum of inspection.

So, for a grade I am giving you a temporary D, and asking you to take a fair look at the actual data and analysis on both sides of this complex matter of climate modeling before submitting it again.

Senator, I hope this was amusing and provided a bit of food for thought. I didn't include any comments in this “grading” about your argument for censorship, because it's outside the bounds of a statistics course, and indeed of the entire academy – Plato's and ours – to advocate banning rather than refuting others' opinions. But I will say that it troubles me that our Democratic Party, long the protector of the First Amendment right of freedom of speech and of our inherent right of freedom of thought, and rightly celebrated for its battle against the cancel culture of Senator Joseph McCarthy, is moving towards addressing ideas it disputes by silencing them.

As I follow your argument for Facebook censoring my views, (1) the CO2 Coalition knowingly lies (that's the definition of disinformation); (2) these lies will reduce public support for “action on climate change” (actually, energy action, since the

climatic results of reducing CO₂ emissions are precisely what the models have tried, and failed so far, to project); and (3) without such action, “communities and economies...will continue to be ravaged by the climate crisis.” (Actually, “continue” is premature, since as noted, there is no climate crisis yet, only a projected one.)

There is much here, of course, that I think is unproven and that I think you didn't prove or even try to prove in your letter. But even if it were all true, wouldn't it be better to tolerate our disagreement, and then defeat my nefarious efforts in debate than to simply silence them? Surely, Facebook users are smart enough to assess evidence and make up their own minds, just like my students were. I still subscribe to the dictum often attributed to Voltaire: I may disagree strongly with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.

I look forward to chatting with you about all this, at your convenience.

With very best wishes and all respect,

Dr. Caleb Stewart Rossiter
Executive Director

cc:

Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
Senator Tom Carper
Senator Brian Schatz

¹ <https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/07.15.2020%20Letter%20from%20Sens.%20Warren,%20Carper,%20Whitehouse,%20&%20Schatz%20to%20Mr.%20Zuckerberg.pdf>

² <https://co2coalition.org/2020/06/23/ee-alarmist-article-on-facebooks-climate-model-fact-checking-needs-its-own-fact-checking/>

³ <https://co2coalition.org/2020/06/16/climate-statistics-101/>

⁴ <http://co2coalition.org/publications/on-climate-sensitivity/>

⁵ <https://co2coalition.org/2020/04/09/equal-warming-1900-to-1950-versus-1950-to-2018-why-the-un-knows-the-first-half-was-natural/>

⁶ <https://co2coalition.org/2020/04/09/equal-warming-1900-to-1950-versus-1950-to-2018-why-the-un-knows-the-first-half-was-natural/>

⁷ <https://co2coalition.org/2019/07/25/u-s-government-climate-science-vs-u-s-government-climate-crisis/>