

Statement of the AAAS Board Of Directors Concerning the Virginia Attorney General's Investigation of Prof. Michael Mann's Work While on the Faculty of University of Virginia

Approved by the AAAS Board of Directors
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The progress of science and its integrity depend both on full transparency about the details of scientific methodology and on academic freedom to follow the pursuit of truth wherever the data lead. Scientific progress occurs largely through a self-correcting system, in which research results are shared and critically evaluated by one's peers, experiments are reproduced when necessary, and disagreements over the interpretation of data, the methodology of an experiment, or the revelation of errors in research are part of daily scientific discourse.

In April 2010, the Attorney General of Virginia, Kenneth Cuccinelli, launched an investigation of climate researcher Professor Michael Mann, currently the Director of the Earth System Science Center at Pennsylvania State University. Mr. Cuccinelli's investigation, unless based on a much more substantial body of evidence than is apparent, could inappropriately inhibit the free exchange of scientific findings and ideas and thus limit the progress of science. The investigation, under Virginia's Fraud Against Taxpayers Act, seeks very detailed information about five grants for climate change research in which

Professor Mann was involved while serving on the University of Virginia faculty from 1999-2005.

While AAAS supports the responsibility of state and federal officials to oversee the proper use of grant funds, the manner in which this investigation is being conducted and the lack of a clear rationale for it suggest that the investigation may be aimed at something other than financial malfeasance. The request for information goes far beyond what is needed to determine financial propriety, including substantive emails with colleagues, computer codes, and the detailed data resulting from Dr. Mann's work.

Thousands of studies, including Dr. Mann's work, have produced a growing mountain of evidence leading to the scientific consensus on human-induced global climate change. Both scientists and policymakers may disagree with the scientific conclusions of Professor Mann and other leading scientists and with their policy implications. But there are proven and well-established means for resolving disagreements over research results within the scientific community. Scientists

should not be subjected to fraud investigations simply for providing scientific results that may be controversial or inconvenient, particularly on high-profile topics of interest to society. The way to resolve controversies of this nature is through scientific review and additional research.

In the majority of cases, scientific disagreements are unrelated to any kind of fraud and are considered a legitimate and normal part of the process of scientific progress. The scientific community takes seriously their responsibility for policing scientific misconduct, and extensive procedures exist to ensure the credibility of the research enterprise. Unless founded on some openly discussed evidence of potential misconduct, investigations such as that targeting Professor Mann could have a long-lasting and chilling effect on a broad spectrum of research fields that are critical to a range of national interests from public health to national security to the environment. Unless more clearly justified, Attorney General Cuccinelli's apparently political action should be withdrawn.