

# Bush Administration 'Distorts Science' -Report

*By Maggie Fox, Health and Science Correspondent*

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Top scientists and environmentalists on Wednesday accused the Bush administration of suppressing and distorting scientific findings that run counter to its own policies.

They backed a report from the Union of Concerned Scientists that said the administration had suppressed research on global warming, air quality, sexual health, cancer and other issues.

The report said there had been a systematic effort to manipulate the government's supposedly independent scientific advisory system "to prevent the appearance of advice that might run counter to the administration's political agenda."

"We are not ... taking issue with the administration's policies. We are taking issue with the administration's distortion of the process with which science enters into its decisions," Dr. Kurt Gottfried, a professor of physics at Cornell University and chairman of the UCS, told reporters.

Russell Train, head of the Environmental Protection Agency ([news - web sites](#)) under former Republican presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, said that during his tenure "I do not recall ever receiving a suggestion, let alone an order, from the White House as to how I should make a regulatory decision."

"How times have changed," Train added.

Neal Lane of Rice University in Houston and former science adviser to ex-president Bill Clinton ([news - web sites](#)) said scientific findings were being kept from decision-makers.

"I am afraid that our leading policymakers simply don't know what they don't know given the manipulation of the science advice process," Lane told reporters.

## WHITE HOUSE DENIAL

The White House denied the accusations.

"I can assure you that this is an administration that makes decisions based on the best available science," President Bush ([news - web sites](#))'s spokesman Scott McClellan said.

"I just don't think these incidents or issues add up to strong support for the accusation that this administration is deliberately acting to undermine the processes of science," John Marburger, director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, told reporters in a conference call.

Marburger noted that the group making the complaints included esteemed scientists and said the government obviously needed to do a better job of communicating its policies.

The UCS reviewed long-standing complaints that the federal government had deliberately disregarded a worldwide consensus that human industrial activity is to blame for much of the steady warming of the planet's climate over the past century.

It also cited what it called the suppression of an EPA study that found the bipartisan Senate Clear Air Bill would do more to reduce mercury contamination in fish and would prevent more deaths than the administration's proposed Clear Skies Act would.

"This is akin to the White House directing the National Weather Service ([news - web sites](#)) to alter a hurricane forecast because they want everyone to think we have clear skies ahead," said UCS president Kevin Knobloch.

Public health groups have long complained that the White House changed advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([news - web sites](#)) to support the administration's abstinence-only sex education policy.

They have said it removed from the CDC's Web site a CDC fact sheet on condom use.

"I don't know anything about that," Marburger said. (With additional reporting by Steve Holland)