

Foreword

Politics and science are intrinsically related.

Politicians, like all citizens, welcome the improvements in the physical world that have come from science, and they also worry about unintended consequences that accompany some scientific advances. In their quest to improve society, politicians have embraced science and increased government funding for research. Use of the public largesse is accompanied by political judgment and even direction about which kinds of science should be pursued and which discouraged or ignored.

Scientists, eager to continue their research, are influenced to propose research that they judge is most likely to obtain government funding. Others elect to pursue funding from regulatory agencies, possibly thinking that results and conclusions that support instituting or expanding of regulations may be more likely to be rewarded with continued funding.

Political-scientific interactions are part of the modern world. There is no doubt that some such interactions have paid great dividends to society for improvements in the physical, biological, engineering, and technological world.

As the essays in this book illuminate, however, the interactions between politics and science do not always benefit society. Politicians can focus on scientific observations that provide support for a decision that they favor for other reasons. Scientists can tailor their research programs and, perhaps more often, slant their conclusions to encourage politicians to believe that great payoffs will follow from their research or that a lurking catastrophe can be detected or prevented only if funding for their research continues. At a more mundane level, when drawing conclusions from research into environmental risks, the scientist intent on continuing research and the government administrator intent on expanding the reach of his or her agency are likely to focus on results that favor their interests.

The essays in this book, written by scientists who have participated in or witnessed firsthand political-scientific interactions, provide descriptions of political manipulations of science and of political considerations. The essays describe excessive politicization—the misapplication or outright manipulation of the scientific record to advance policy agendas. Ultimately, actions such as those described have unintended consequences, the brunt of which are borne by everyday citizens, not those who politicize at the expense of objectivity.

Scholars of the Hoover Institution and the George C. Marshall Institute cooperated on this project to draw attention to the misgivings of politicization for citizens as well as for public policy. These essays are intended to offer important insights to society about the costs of misusing science for political ends that involve the nation's policymakers, interest groups, media, and scientists. Better policy decisions and efficient use of society's resources will come from an examination of all available science that is embarked upon in ways that encourage the public interest and discourage purely opportunistic behavior.

A number of individuals worked on various stages of this

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project from its conception to its publication. This project started with conversations between Director John Raisian of the Hoover Institution and John Moore and Jeffrey Salmon of the George C. Marshall Institute. Mark Herlong of the Marshall Institute provided valuable assistance and Richard Sousa, Hoover's senior associate director, provided guidance and assistance through virtually all phases of the process.

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