

March for Science: Worldwide protests begin to support 'evidence'

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LONDON (CNN) —

Crowds of people are marching Saturday in the United States and around the world in support of science and evidence-based research, in a protest fueled by opposition to US President Donald Trump's environmental and energy policies.

Besides the main march in Washington, organizers said more than 600 "satellite" marches were due to take place globally in a protest timed to coincide with Earth Day.

The march, whose beginnings reflect the viral birth of the Women's March on Washington, has been billed by its organizers as political but non-partisan. The event's website describes itself as "the first step of a global movement to defend the vital role science plays in our health, safety, economies and governments."

"I think there has been a declining sense of what science means to progress. I think we take so much for granted," said march honorary co-chair Dr. Lydia Villa-Komaroff ahead of the event.

Demonstrators in New Zealand and Australia kicked off the day of protest.

In Sydney, marchers carried banners, many homemade, with slogans such as "Science makes sense," "Science-based policy = stuff that works," and "Climate change is real, clean coal is not." Another placard displayed the message, "Governments: stop ignoring inconvenient science!"

Chant for evidence-based science

It wasn't only major cities where scientists and their supporters came out in support of science.

Rebecca McElroy, an astrophysics doctoral student at the University of Sydney, tweeted video of a "mini march for science" around the dome of the Anglo-Australian Telescope in New South Wales.

Demonstrators also turned out in New Zealand cities including Wellington, Auckland, Dunedin and Christchurch.

New Zealand Green Party co-leader James Shaw tweeted a popular chant from the marchers: "What

do we want? Evidence-based science! When do we want it? After peer review!"

'Broader vision'

Scientists and their supporters are also expected to turn out in force in London as well as other marches in France, Ireland, Germany, Portugal and the Netherlands. Marches are also happening in Durban and Capetown, South Africa and Tokyo.

Roger Morris, Professor of Molecular Neurobiology at King's College London, said: "These marches are brilliant — a spontaneous, global response led by young scientists empowered by social media, keenly aware of the global challenges that need to be addressed if their world is to have a civilized, sustainable future." Insular populist politics, which have temporarily triumphed in the US and UK, need to be balanced by the broader vision of youth. "Katherine Mathieson, chief executive of the British Science Association, said she hoped the marches would be a catalyst for people to think about the role science plays in their lives and a chance for scientists to demonstrate the public benefit of their work." "Protecting the government's investment in science, particularly when that includes funding for public engagement, is incredibly important," she said. "Science is not just for scientists and I believe that all of us, whether we work in a lab or not, should have a voice on its future."

Trump's budget proposal, unveiled in March, outlined \$54 billion in cuts across government programs to make way for an increase in defense spending.

US scientists fear this will have a major impact on research and science-based policy, as well as undermining the importance of science in society and limiting future innovation.

"It might have been ignited by Trump, but it's not about Trump," Villa-Komaroff said. "It's about the importance of science in society and continuing the support for the science community in keeping our edge."

Laura Smith-Spark

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Associated Press writer Markus Schreiber in Berlin and CNN contributed to this report.

March for Science spreads across the globe

Besides the main march in Washington, organizers said more than 600 'satellite' marches were due to take place globally in a protest timed to coincide with Earth Day.

WASHINGTON —

Scientists, students and research advocates rallied from the Brandenburg Gate to the Washington Monument on Earth Day, conveying a global message of scientific freedom without political interference and spending necessary to make future breakthroughs possible.

"We didn't choose to be in this battle, but it has come to the point where we have to fight because the stakes are too great," said climate scientist Michael Mann, who regularly clashes with

politicians.

Standing on the National Mall with thousands soaked by rain Saturday, Mann said that like other scientists, he would rather be in his lab, the field or teaching students. But driving his advocacy are officials who deny his research that shows rising global temperatures.

In Gainesville, Florida, more than 1,000 people stretched through the city's streets.

"Most people don't know how much funding for the sciences supports them in their lives every day. Every medical breakthrough, their food, clothing, our cellphones, our computers, all that is science-based," said Pati Vitt, a plant scientist at the Chicago Botanic Garden. "So if we stop funding scientific discoveries now, in 10 years, whatever we might have had won't be, we just won't have it."

At the event in Nashville, Tennessee, where marchers shouted "science, not silence," lawyer Jatin Shah brought his sons, a 5-year-old who wants to be a dentist and 6-year-old who plans to be a doctor. Shah worries about the boys' futures if money is cut for the sciences.

"I fear that we're not going to have the planet that you and I grew up on unless we find new ways to make this earth as livable as possible for as long as we can," Shah said. "And we're not going to have as intellectual a society as we should. We need as many people as possible to be educated in the sciences."

People there carried signs that said "there is no planet B," "make America think again" and "climate change is real, ask any polar bear." Marchers in Geneva held signs that said, "Science — A Candle in the Dark" and "Science is the Answer." In Berlin, several thousand people participated in a march from one of the city's universities to the landmark Brandenburg Gate. "We need to make more of our decisions based on facts again and less on emotions," said Meike Weltin, a doctorate student at an environmental institute near the capital.

In London, physicists, astronomers, biologists and celebrities gathered for a march past the city's most celebrated research institutions. Supporters carried signs showing images of a double helix and chemical symbols. In Spain, hundreds assembled in Madrid, Barcelona and Seville.

Organizers portrayed the march as political but not partisan, promoting the understanding of science as well as defending it from various attacks, including proposed U.S. government budget cuts under President Donald Trump, such as a 20 percent slice of the National Institute of Health.

In Washington, the sign that 9-year-old Sam Klimas held was red, handmade and personal: "Science saved my life." He had a form of brain cancer and has been healthy for eight years now. His mother, grandmother and brother traveled with him from Parkersburg, West Virginia. "I have to do everything I can to oppose the policies of this administration," said his grandmother, Susan Sharp.

The rallies set for more than 500 cities were putting scientists, who generally shy away from advocacy and whose work depends on objective experimentation, into a more public position.

Scientists said they were anxious about political and public rejection of established science such as climate change and the safety of vaccine immunizations.

"Scientists find it appalling that evidence has been crowded out by ideological assertions," said Rush Holt, a former physicist and Democratic congressman who runs the American Association for the Advancement of Science. "It is not just about Donald Trump, but there is also no question that marchers are saying 'when the shoe fits.'"

Judy Twigg, a public health professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, was aiming one of her signs at the president. The sign showed the periodic table of chemical elements and said: “You’re out of your element Donny (Trump).” For Twigg, who was wearing a T-shirt that said “Science is not a liberal conspiracy,” research is a matter of life and death on issues such as polio and child mortality.

Despite saying the march was not partisan, Holt acknowledged it was only dreamed up at the Women’s March on Washington, a day after Trump’s Jan. 20 inauguration.

“It’s not about the current administration. The truth is we should have been marching for science 30 years ago, 20 years, 10 years ago,” said co-organizer and public health researcher Caroline Weinberg. “The current (political) situation took us from kind of ignoring science to blatantly attacking it. And that seems to be galvanizing people in a way it never has before. ... It’s just sort of relentless attacks on science.”

“The scientific method was developed to be nonpartisan and objective,” Weinberg said. “It should be embraced by both parties.”

SETH BORENSTEIN

* AP | Updated: 5:20 PM EDT Apr 22, 2017:

<http://www.wbaltv.com/article/good-samaritans-save-woman-trapped-in-flooded-car/9544713>

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Defend Science on Earth Day and Beyond

On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans participated in the first Earth Day—a nation-wide demonstration to advocate for a healthier planet. This marked the start of the modern environmental movement and heralded the beginning of a coordinated American effort to live more sustainably and ethically with nature. Indeed, the first Earth Day led to the passage of a slew of environmental laws, including the 1973 Endangered Species Act.

Since then, science has been an intrinsic part of saving nature. In the process we’ve learned that science serves everyone. It saves human lives, conserves the environment, protects water and air, and safeguards the future for life on Earth. Science is non-partisan. It’s not democratic or republican, it’s just the truth. And it’s under siege today in the US.

Forty-seven years later, on April 22, 2017, millions of people are taking to the streets again to celebrate Earth Day across North America and globally. But what’s different this year is that many will be scientists protesting the Trump administration’s massive challenges to science. These threats include environmental policies that affect the US and other nations, such as gutting NASA’s Earth Science Program, dismantling the Environmental Protection Agency, and withdrawing from the Paris Agreement (a science-based treaty to address climate change).

Over the past two months, scientists have been engaged in soul-searching debates privately and in the social media about whether it’s appropriate for them to join Earth Day March for Science protests. We’re taught to be unbiased and impartial in our quest to find the truth using our research. But today even the most staid scientists have been pushed so far past the tipping point by Trump-era challenges to scientific freedom that they’re joining the march.

This Earth Day, I urge you to join the science march closest to where you live. Raise your voice and

make it known that science provides the lifeblood of conservation, that the two are inseparable and essential in order for humans to live more sustainably and ethically on this planet.

Beyond marching, science is also taking action in the Trump Era by fighting to conduct research that examines the connections between humans, the environment, and what it takes to create resilient, healthy ecosystems. I'm one of those scientists who despite political obstacles, for years have worked hard for the freedom to do science that addresses controversial conservation problems such as wolf conservation.

Since 2006 I've been doing research in the Northern Rocky Mountains on how food-web relationships between wolves, elk, and the foods elk eat shape whole ecosystems. In this work, my colleagues and I have been collaborating with landowners who are mostly ranchers, and with federal, state, and provincial land managers, conservation organizations, and Indigenous communities. Over the years, our study has developed into an Earthwatch Institute-funded partnership with Waterton Lakes National Park and the Kainai First Nation that includes a third force of nature—bison. Citizen science, the trademark of all Earthwatch projects, is central to our project, Restoring Fire, Wolves, and Bison to the Canadian Rockies.

Tomorrow please remember that every day is Earth Day. Let the strength and inspiration you draw from each other infuse the rest of the year. One way to make it so is by participating in science. Please consider reaching out to scientists and offering to help them with their research. Please let them know how much you value their contribution to conservation and society.

Cristina Eisenberg

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* 04/21/2017 07:15 pm ET:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/defend-science-on-earth-day-and-beyond_us_58fa9056e4b086ce589810f9

P.S.

* <http://www.siawi.org/article14367.html>