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Climate skeptics call on BYU, scientists to say they're sorry

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Brigham Young University and a group of its earth scientists ought to apologize to a state lawmaker and a climate-change contrarian invited to Utah as an expert witness last year, says the Utah Farm Bureau.

Randy Parker, chairman of the farm group, said Thursday that BYU paleoclimatologist Summer Rupper and her university owe apologies to Rep. Mike Noel and Roy Spencer of Alabama, the climate researcher the Kanab Republican invited.

He was making a presentation on behalf of Rep. Kerry Gibson, R-Ogden, who was promoting his HJR12, which urges the Environmental Protection Agency to drop plans to regulate carbon dioxide under the Clean Air Act.

The federal moves, supporters say, are based on bogus science conducted by researchers on a climate-change "gravy train."

"Brigham Young University needs to take a step back and evaluate where they are on this," said Parker, speaking to the House Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment Committee, which sent the resolution to the House floor in a 10-1 vote.

Both BYU and one of the scientists behind the controversy said Thursday there won't be an apology.

"We attacked some of [Spencer's] positions," BYU geochemist Barry Bickmore said. "We didn't attack him."

Gibson, flanked by Parker, told how Washington proposals to regulate greenhouse-gas emissions and begin a cap-and-trade program would devastate Utah's economy and its farmers.

"What it comes down to is agriculture is being regulated and taxed to death under this kind of mentality," said Gibson, who wondered whether the federal policies someday could cut Utah farm profits in half.

Parker fleshed out the thinking behind Gibson's legislation with a critique of climate science and the call on the BYU scientists and their school to apologize.

"They're reviewing the literature, but I'd like to know if they are doing cutting-edge research like Dr. Spencer is on some of the things that may in fact have an impact" on climate change, Parker said. "I guess the bottom line here, from my perspective, is science is an open process of ongoing research and debate, and a group of scientists should not make these kinds of statements about another scientist and about the chairman who invited them here."

Eighteen BYU earth scientists wrote to Noel's Interim Committee on Public Utilities and Technology last fall a few days after Spencer, an author and researcher at the University of Alabama, testified about his work and explained why he thinks the generally accepted understanding of climate-change science is wrong and compromised by politics and greed.

Spencer said, during his Oct. 16 testimony, that his work on the impacts of clouds on climate had not been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal.

The 18 scientists, including Rupper, wrote to the interim committee a few days later to take lawmakers to task for putting too much weight on "fringe positions," considering that more than 97 percent of active climate scientists and the world's major scientific societies agree that humans are accelerating climate change with excessive greenhouse-

gas emissions.

They also noted that it was "patently false" that scientists had ignored the impact of natural climate cycles, as Spencer testified, and that lawmakers should rely on the best-available science in making policy decisions.

BYU spokesman Michael Smart noted that the 18 scientists who signed the October letter have said all along they do not represent the university's views.

"The faculty have always been clear they are speaking for themselves and not for the university," he said. "The university doesn't take a position on this issue, so we don't have any comment on it."

Eleven BYU biologists and earth scientists wrote to the Natural Resources Committee on Wednesday to urge them to table Gibson's resolution, based on numerous errors in the resolution's scientific conclusion. Its signers note that some of them personally agree the EPA regulations are not the best solution.

"Even if all the political solutions proposed so far are flawed," they wrote, "this does not justify politicians in attacking the science that indicates there is almost certainly a serious problem."

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