

Reality Check - Lies Matter

Together We Build, Nov 2, 2022

By Thomas Beck, AIA, NCARB

Lies matter. If we want to keep Democracy and the freedoms we enjoy as citizens of the United States of America we have to make lying wrong again. Truth deniers, like Alex Jones and his aptly named “Infowars” program, lie about the assault on Sandy Hook Elementary. What better name for a program based on false information and misinformation? We are at war with facts.

You cannot solve climate change if you have people like Elon Musk promoting lies on Twitter. Other media and social media outlets promote and make money off of lies, too. Scientific American covered a Wall Street Journal opinion piece amplifying the climate lies of author Steve Koonin, written by Marc Thiessen. “Thiessen is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. For those unfamiliar with the tangled world of organized climate denial, a recent study paints a pretty clear picture: of all the conservative, climate-denying think tanks that get Koch and other industry funding, AEI has gotten the most. It received some \$380 million to peddle industry-friendly denial like Koonin’s, much of it through dark money pass-throughs to conceal that it’s coming from conservative and dirty-energy donors.” Mediamatters.org says “Real climate scientists and experts have lambasted Koonin’s book. Some of the major claims Koonin made in his May 6 Fox appearances came directly from his book, which was reviewed in an April 25 Wall Street Journal piece that repeated a number of its claims. Climate Feedback, a website featuring climate scientists who review dubious climate pieces in the media, reviewed the article and estimated “its overall scientific credibility to be very low.””

<https://climatefeedback.org/evaluation/wall-street-journal-article-repeats-multiple-incorrect-and-misleading-claims-made-in-steven-koonins-new-book-unsettled-steven-koonin/>;
<https://www.mediamatters.org/climate-deniers/right-wing-media-are-having-field-day-physicist-steve-koonins-new-book-climate>; <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/that-obama-scientist-climate-skeptic-youve-been-hearing-about/>)

Those spreading lies need to be held accountable for the damages they cause, including election deniers who insist that the 2020 presidential election was stolen. Deniers such as “Stop the Steal” radical right wing nut job David DePape, who broke into Nancy Pelosi’s house with the intent to harm her. Twitter amplified the lie that Mr. Pelosi, the Speaker of the House’s octogenarian husband, is not the victim of an attack by a maniacal, political would-be assassin, but of a gay tryst gone bad. (<https://www.businessinsider.com/paul-pelosi-attack-right-wing-conspiracy-theories-david-depape-indictment-2022-10>)

Who are the real liars? Politicians who refuse to say whether they will concede losing a free and fair election in the USA. Politicians who still say the 2020 presidential election was stolen. Facts continue to come to light about the false claims promoted by the more than 60 lawsuits filed to overturn the election, then dismissed by judges, some of whom were appointed by POTUS 45, the FORMER president of the United States.

Brazil just elected “Lula”, Lula da Silva. Thank God for Brazilians, the planet thanks you! “Brazil is ready to resume its leading role in the fight against the climate crisis.” Lula told supporters in his victory speech on Sunday “We will prove it’s possible to generate wealth without destroying the environment.” The pledge matters because Brazil contains much of the Amazon rainforest. Right now, the forest absorbs planet-warming carbon dioxide from the

atmosphere and stores it in tree roots, branches and the soil. By one estimate, there are 150 to 200 billion metric tons of carbon locked away in the forest. But that could change. If deforestation continues, the jungle may soon become a net emitter of greenhouse gases.“
(<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/31/climate/brazil-election-lula-bolsonaro-climate.html>)

During the term of President Bolsonaro deforestation sharply increased.

Here are some facts recently highlighted by historian Heather Cox Richardson on October 21,2020. “Since [Biden] took office, the nation has added 10 million jobs and has seen unemployment drop to 3.5%, a 50-year low. In 11 states, unemployment is at all-time lows, and 17 states have unemployment rates under 3%.

He also highlighted that the country has added almost 700,000 manufacturing jobs and that companies are continuing to invest in new industries, at the same time that we are rebuilding our roads, airports, bridges, and ports.

But his main point today was to demonstrate how the Democrats’ program does not, in fact, blow up the nation’s finances the way Republicans have insisted for forty years. Biden focused on the deficit, which is the gap between what the government takes in through taxes and other revenue sources and what it pays out. Republicans insist that social welfare spending racks up government debt; Biden emphasized today that the Democrats’ investment in the nation has not increased the federal deficit. Indeed, the opposite is true: today the administration announced that the deficit this year fell by \$1.4 trillion. This was the largest-ever decline in the federal deficit. Last year’s drop was \$350 billion.

The deficit climbed every year of the Trump presidency, including in the years before the pandemic. Trump and the Republicans added \$400 billion to the deficit, primarily because of their \$2 trillion tax cut for the wealthy and for corporations.”

She goes on to point out “According to Politifact, Republican presidents since Ronald Reagan have exploded deficits, while Democrats have brought deficits down. Reagan sent the deficit from \$70 billion to \$175 billion. George H.W. Bush took it to \$300 billion. Bill Clinton—with help from Bush’s willingness to raise taxes—got the deficit to zero. George W. Bush took it back up to \$1.2 trillion with unfunded wars. Barack Obama cut that back to \$600 billion. And Trump’s tax cuts sent it skyrocketing again, even before pandemic spending sent it higher still.”

(https://open.substack.com/pub/heathercoxrichardson/p/october-21-2022?r=f9js7&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email)

It seems much of our voting population trust only their own personal source of “alternate facts”. We have heard people quoted as saying they get all of their information from social media, which is like asking your friends and family for medical advice. If they are medical professionals this might be a good idea. We prefer to understand history via historians, and science via scientists. Journalism from truth seeking journalists and fact checkers. The quality of the journalism one consumes matters.

It is astonishing how it is possible for people to have the access to see actual events, hear actual statements and still believe misleading spin by ill intentioned jerks. Attacking officials elected in fair, open, democratic elections, and encouraging violent actions against them, is despicable. If these kinds of personal threats against public servants continue, the only candidates we will have are those seeking to hide their personal legal troubles behind the immunity of elected public office. At least Brazilians are smart enough to understand the lies underlying their recent election. Are we smart enough to do the same in ours?

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Beck, Thomas W. "Reality Check - Lies Matter" *Estes Park Trail Gazette*, Friday November 2, 2022, <https://www.eptail.com/2022/11/02/together-we-build-reality-check-lies-matter/>