

Simmering Solar, Languishing Libertarians? **by Stephen P. Cook**

Rather than demonizing each other, it's nice when groups normally on opposite "culture war" sides find common ground and work together. Hoping to facilitate that, I'm calling on local libertarians to join me in supporting economic freedom and opposing unneeded regulations that Yavapai County government enacted last November. It targeted solar developers—and I'm still "simmering." I'm asking libertarians to join me in telling County Supervisors to back off, since—in the words of Autumn Johnson, Executive Director of the Arizona Solar Energy Industries Association—they are infringing on "free market principles and private property rights."

Tell the (mostly new) Supervisors to fix the flawed Solar Facilities Zoning Ordinance their (lame duck) predecessors passed. It severely limits much needed clean renewable energy development and shuts the door on a revenue stream for the County and private land owners—potentially leaving billions of dollars on the table. They can fix it by establishing what Prescott City Council candidate Jay Ruby has called "solar encouragement zones"—areas where utility-scale solar installations can exist with minimal impact.

Solar-related issues are hot—locally and globally. How hot? I'd say simmering, not boiling, which brings me to "libertarian pundit" (*Wikipedia's* characterization) John Stossel's column in the April 18th *Courier*. Stossel takes issue with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who recently said, "The era of global boiling has arrived." He doesn't like the word "boiling." Neither do I—Guterres should have used "simmering." Hopefully—if we take steps to reign in heat-trapping greenhouse gases produced by burning fossil fuel—we'll never enter a "global boiling" era.

The content of Stossel's column headlined "Climate Myths" — and a followup (April 25) one— is largely based on Linnea Lueken's work. Another article says "Stossel picked Lueken because she's one of the best climate experts in America." Who wrote that? Lueken did (in an April 22 post on the heartland.org website.) In other words, she's calling herself "one of the best climate experts in America." Wow—what a self-promoter! Who is she?

Linnea is not a climate scientist. She got a bachelor's degree in Petroleum Engineering from the University of Wyoming in 2017, and soon after went to work for the Heartland Institute. Here's what mediabiasfactcheck.com website says of that group: "Overall, we rate the Heartland Institute Right Biased and Questionable based on promoting anti-science propaganda, lack of transparency with funding, and more than five failed fact checks..." The Union of Concerned Scientists says, "Heartland has a long history of intentionally trying to confuse the public on behalf of corporate sponsors. The Heartland Institute has received funding in the past from notable right-leaning institutions such as Exxon-Mobil [and the] Charles G. Koch Foundation..."

Science teaches us to be initially skeptical—not to take things at face-value. John Stossel looks young as pictured in the *Courier*, but don't assume that. Fact: He's 78 years old. More importantly, when you see a column with "hot button" credentials—like "Climate Myths" featuring "Heartland Institute Research Fellow"— don't immediately assume you're getting cold unbiased reporting. Do some digging like I did to arrive at a better assumption: you're getting what Heartland Institute's big oil sponsors want you to hear.

Does that mean everything in Stossel's two articles is wrong? No. He does say, "Climate change is real." But he nitpicks, confuses, and tries to score small points while hiding the grim climate change impact reality unfolding

around the world—and discouraging steps to combat the root cause. Lueken says “2024...saw record coverage of the Great Barrier Reef” —ignoring record ocean temperatures and our “experiencing the most intense global coral bleaching event on record” (see April 24 2025 scientificamerican.com) Drought ? Wildfires? No mention of losing Paradise, almost losing Los Angeles, or the California insurance crisis. Should we focus on whether polar bears currently have adequate sea ice? Not if it means we miss seeing a disturbing trend: as highly reflective sea ice melts and is replaced by darker water, more sunlight is absorbed, leading to warmer temperatures, more sea ice melting, etc.

This describes a feedback loop, one of many found in global climate models. I had my university students using such models long ago—before Linnea Lueken was wearing diapers. Did she grow up and use climate models as a student in petroleum geology classes? Should we argue whether she’s a “climate expert”? Not when Trump is firing real climate experts—people we need if we’re to keep global simmering from becoming worse.

Finally, solar panels are a hot commodity in China—priced (says *PV magazine*) at 12 cents a watt, 500 times cheaper than when I started shopping for them in 1980 (in inflation adjusted dollars). Maybe you can buy them at Walmart at bargain prices if we have more “free market” and less Trump tariffs / “command economy”? Libertarians, speak up!



You can contact former university professor and Prescott resident Stephen P. Cook at feedback@projectworldview.org. To follow the conversation google the “Courier Climate Dialogues” webpage.