

Trump to nominate climate doubter as environmental adviser (Update)

October 13 2017, by Michael Biesecker

President Donald Trump will nominate a climate change skeptic with ties to the fossil fuel industry to serve as a top environmental adviser.

The White House on Thursday announced the selection of Kathleen Hartnett White of Texas to serve as chair of the Council on Environmental Quality. White served under former Texas Gov. Rick Perry, now Trump's energy secretary, for six years on a commission overseeing the state environmental agency.

White was fiercely critical of what she called the Obama administration's "imperial EPA" and pushed back against stricter limits on air and water pollution. She is a senior fellow at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a conservative think tank that has received funding from fossil-fuel companies that include Koch Industries, ExxonMobil and Chevron.

In a 2014 policy paper titled "Fossil Fuels: The Moral Case," White praised the burning of coal and petroleum for "vastly improved living conditions across the world" and credited fossil fuels with ending slavery.

She also likened the work of mainstream climate scientists to "the dogmatic claims of ideologues and clerics." White is a member of the CO2 Coalition, a group that seeks to educate "thought leaders, policy makers, and the public about the important contribution made by carbon dioxide to our lives and the economy."

In an op-ed published in The Hill newspaper last year, White took aim at Obama-era policies that sought to slow global warming by limiting carbon emissions from coal-fired power plants. Climate scientists point to the rising concentrations of carbon emitted into the atmosphere through burning fossil fuels with a corresponding increase in global average temperatures.

"The truth is that our bodies, blood and bones are built of carbon!" White wrote. "Carbon dioxide is a necessary nutrient for plant life, acting as the catalyst for the most essential energy conversion process on planet earth: photosynthesis. Carbon dioxide is an odorless, invisible, harmless and completely natural gas lacking any characteristic of a pollutant."

A native of Kansas, White holds degrees from Stanford University in East Asian studies and comparative literature.

White House spokeswoman Kelly Love said White is "eminently qualified."

"Her nomination was cleared by the Office of Government Ethics," Love said. "We look forward to Mrs. White being confirmed."

The Council on Environmental Quality coordinates federal environmental efforts and works with agencies and White House offices in the development of environmental policies and initiatives. According to its congressional mandate, the council is to "encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment" and promote "efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere."

Environmental groups and Democrats quickly criticized White's pending nomination, which will require confirmation by the Republican-

controlled Senate.

Christy Goldfuss, who chaired the Council on Environmental Quality under President Barack Obama, said White's alliance with the fossil fuel industry "makes her unfit to hold the highest environmental post in the government to advise the president on the real moral threat to our country: climate change." Goldfuss is a vice president of energy and environmental policy at the left-leaning Center for American Progress.

Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune called White's selection "outrageous."

"The nomination of Kathleen Hartnett White is the nightmare scenario for anyone who wants clean air and clean water," he said. "Her record makes clear she is completely ready and willing to sell out the health of our kids to corporate polluters."

© 2017 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Trump to nominate climate doubter as environmental adviser (Update) (2017, October 13) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-10-trump-climate-doubter-environmental.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.