

'Make America Smart Again': hundreds rally for US science

April 15 2018



Demonstrators take part in the March for Science in Washington, DC on April 14, 2018; local scientists and supporters joined a global March for Science to fight back against what many see as an "assault on facts" by populist politicians

Gesturing towards the White House, home to President Donald Trump who has called himself "a very stable genius," Isaac Newton begged to differ.

"Knowing many geniuses, and being one myself, I would venture to say that was rather a boastful claim on his part," said "Newton," actually Dean Howarth, a Virginia high school physics teacher in period dress.

Howarth was among hundreds of people who turned out to a "March for Science" Saturday in Washington to "create tangible change and call for greater accountability of public officials to enact evidence-based policy," according to organizers.

That was the formal message of the rally, one of more than 200 events being carried out around the world.

But as keynote speaker Sheila Jasanoff said, the signs carried by people like Howarth told a more direct and simple story.

Many of those messages, while more restrained than Howarth's, carried implicit criticism of Trump, who withdrew from the global Paris Agreement on climate change, has defended [coal-fired power plants](#), seeks to roll back environmental regulations, and has yet to name his top science advisor.

"Make America Smart Again," said a placard carried by one demonstrator, giving an alternative take on Trump's "Make America Great Again" pledge.



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"We're here because no one wants to be led by the gut feelings of our elected officials," Jasanoff, a Professor of Science and Technology Studies at Harvard, said in her opening address without specifically referring to Trump's widely-reported tendency to govern by instinct rather than analysis.

"Good science depends on good democracy. Let me repeat: good science

needs good democracy," she said.

David Titley, a retired rear admiral who led the US Navy's task force on climate change, told the crowd that science shows we need to "take actions now to avoid the worst of the risks we know are highly likely to appear."

Many in the crowd listened under the shade of cherry blossom trees beneath the Washington Monument on the first summer-like Saturday of the year.

"Science is what separates facts from fallacies, falsehoods and fanaticism," Titley said. "If we ignore and denigrate science we do so at our own peril."

Suzelle Fiedler, 44, a former laboratory worker, told AFP she attended the rally because of the administration's desire to cut research funding, and "they're dismissing a lot of scientific facts like [climate change](#)."

Steven Schrader's sign proclaimed that he is not a "mad scientist. I'm furious."

Schrader, 66, told AFP the administration "is trying to essentially take [science](#) out of decision making."

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