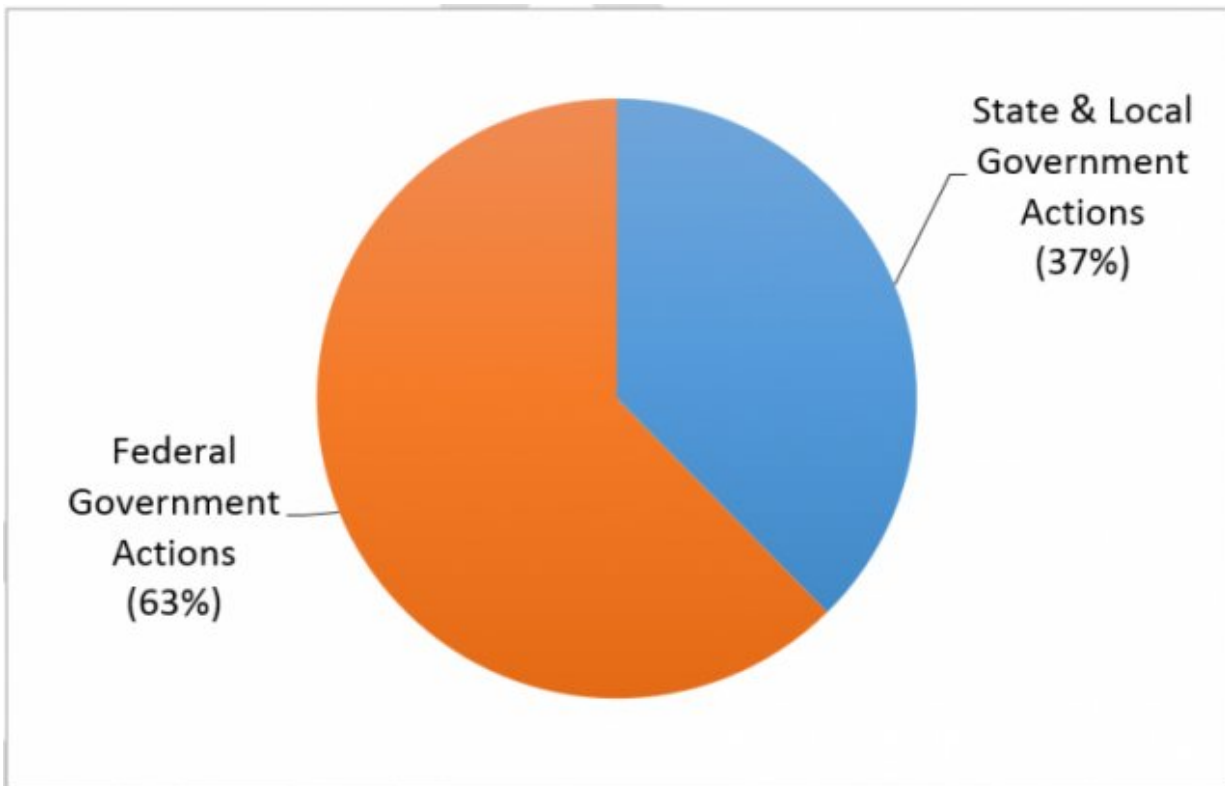


Silencing science tracker expanded to include state and local government actions

September 25 2018, by Romany Webb



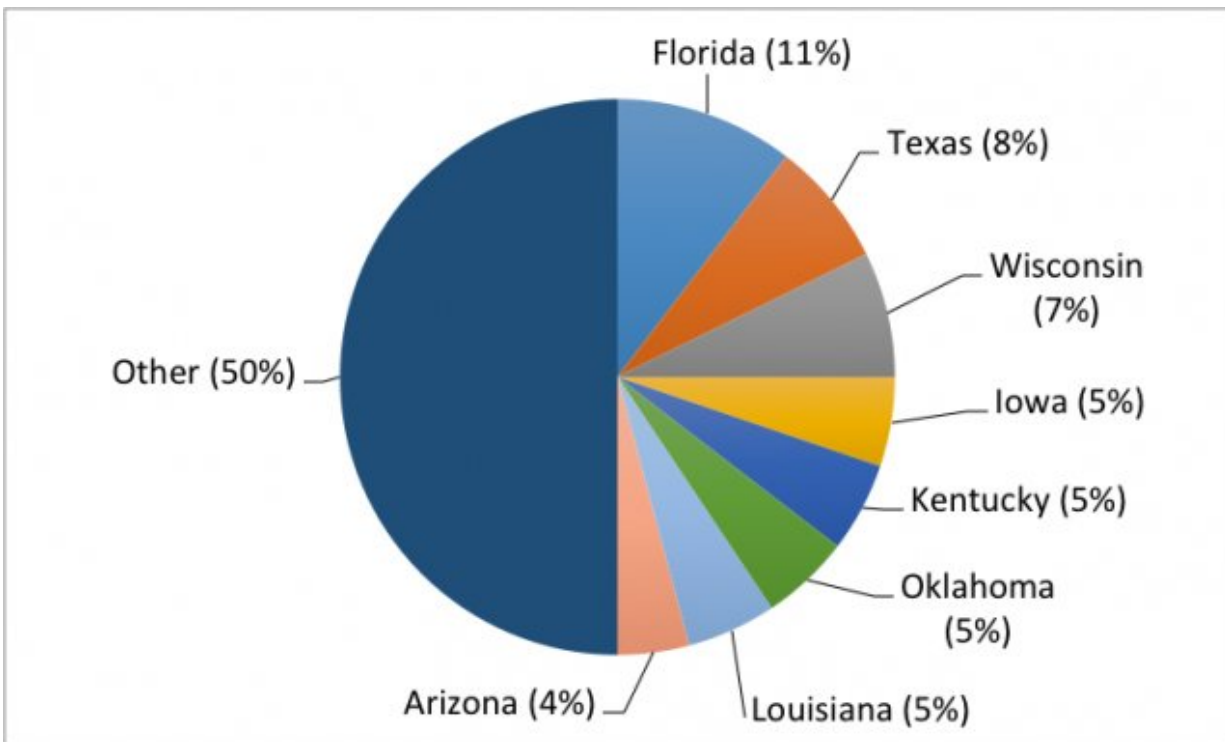
Breakdown of Silencing Science Tracker entries by actor. Credit: Columbia University

In January, Columbia's Sabin Center for Climate Change Law and the Climate Science Legal Defense Fund launched the [Silencing Science Tracker](#) (SST). As its name suggests, the SST records government

attempts to prevent or restrict scientific research, education, or discussion since the November 2016 election. Initially, the SST only recorded anti-science behavior within the federal government, of which we have 161 examples. That does not, however, reflect the full extent of the "war on science" as numerous anti-science actions are also being taken by state and local governments. To increase awareness of those actions, we have expanded the SST, adding state and local government attempts to censor, misrepresent, or otherwise stifle science.

As of Monday, September 24, the expanded SST lists 257 anti-science actions taken by [government](#) actors since the November 2016 election. Of those actions, 63 percent (161) were taken by the [federal government](#), and 37 percent (96) by state and [local governments](#). Unsurprisingly, many of the state and local government actions are concentrated in just a handful of areas, which have a long-history of anti-science [behavior](#). Florida leads the way with 10 entries, followed by Texas and Wisconsin with 7 each, and then Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Oklahoma with 5 each. It would, however, be a mistake to think that anti-science behavior is limited to a small number of "rogue" states. On the contrary, such behavior has occurred in at least 38 [states](#) since November 2016, including many often thought of as leaders on scientific issues, such as California and Vermont.

At both the state and federal levels, much anti-science behavior has centered on [climate change](#), with 70 percent of all SST entries targeting climate scientists.



Breakdown of Silencing Science Tracker entries by state. Credit: Columbia University

The entries fall into seven broad categories. The "[government censorship](#)" category currently includes the most entries, accounting for approximately 29 percent of the total. Many of the entries relate to changes to government websites to remove references to "climate change" (see [here](#) for an example). Of late, however, this has been far more common within the federal government than at the state level. (We have only identified one example—in Wisconsin—of references to "climate change" being removed from state websites since November 2016.) However, state governments have sought to restrict access to information about climate change in other ways, including through "[interference with education](#)," which accounts for over 10 percent of all SST entries. Both state and federal government actors also commonly

engage in "[bias and misrepresentation](#)," with many suggesting that climate change is a "hoax," and/or questioning its causes and effects.

Unfortunately, there is little indication that these attacks on science will subside in the near future. For as long as they occur, we will record them in the SST.

This story is republished courtesy of Earth Institute, Columbia University
<http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu>.

Provided by Earth Institute, Columbia University

Citation: Silencing science tracker expanded to include state and local government actions (2018, September 25) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-09-silencing-science-tracker-state-local.html>

<p>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.</p>
--