

# Ethan Allen Institute

Newsletter – August 2021 (Printer Edition)

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## Top Story:

### Amity Shlaes Headlines Jefferson Day Celebration

The Ethan Allen Institute is excited to announce that Amity Shlaes will be the keynote speaker for our annual Jefferson Day Celebration on Saturday, October 2. The event will be held at the President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site in Plymouth Notch, Vermont, time forthcoming.

For 26 years from 1993-2019, friends of EAI from across Vermont met in person to exchange ideas and learn from some of the most distinguished liberty-minded speakers. 2020 forced us to hold the event virtually for the first time. At long last, we will be able to congregate together in 2021.

Shlaes' speech is entitled "Jefferson and Coolidge." Shlaes is a renowned historian, author, newspaper and magazine columnist, writing about politics and economics. She has authored several New York Times bestsellers:

- “The Great Society” (2020) questions the popular wisdom that LBJ’s Great Society made America a better place.
- “Coolidge” (2014) is a comprehensive biography and reassessment of President Calvin Coolidge. It was named a book of the year by Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan.
- “The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression” (2008) argues that FDR’s actions prolonged the Great Depression, rather than shortened it. It was made into a graphic novel in 2014.
- “The Greedy Hand” (1999) is an illuminating examination of the culture of taxation and a persuasive call for reform.

Shlaes writes a syndicated column for Forbes, is Chairman and CEO of the Coolidge Foundation, and serves as Presidential Scholar at the King’s College in New York. She has written columns for Forbes, Bloomberg and the Financial Times. Her work has been published in The New Yorker, Fortune, National Review, The New Republic, and Foreign Affairs. She has appeared on PBS, The Daily Show, Fox News’ Glenn Beck, ABC’s Good Morning America, Charlie Rose, CNBC’s Kudlow. She has won both the Hayek (2009) and the Bastiat Prize for Journalism (2002).

It has been a long time since we have seen many of you. Save the date and watch the EAI website and future emails for more details and ticket sales!

# Commentary: The Teachers' Union's New Pupil Indoctrination Plan

*By John McClaughry*

The National Education Association's assembly has passed two startling resolutions, to push the union's ideology of racial justice and equity, anti-capitalism, and white oppression into the public school classroom. The "remedy" of concerned citizens regaining control of curriculums only rarely succeeds. A better solution: let objecting parents send their children to independent schools, taking a large fraction of their public school equalized per pupil cost of education with them.

There was a time, fifty years ago, when many teachers, superintendents, and academics belonged to their professional group, founded as the Vermont Teachers Association in 1850. For many years public school teachers – mostly women – usually had the respect of the community but barely enough salary to pay their bills. So in 1969 education activists persuaded a Republican legislature and governor to enact a collective bargaining law. In 1979 the rechristened Vermont-National Education Association emerged as a labor union of predominantly teachers and school support staff members bargaining with local school districts for better salaries and benefits, which admittedly were overdue, and beneficial to the state as a whole.

Today, the democratically-governed VT-NEA labor union represents over 12,000 members organized in almost all local school districts. It can fairly claim to be a leading advocate for the education of Vermont's children.

Given that, and at the risk of oversimplification, the union's traditional agenda can be summarized as a) compulsory membership, b) more teachers in smaller classes, c) higher pay, d) more generous benefits, e) more workplace control, f) resisting independent accountability for results, g) restricting parental choice, and h) suppressing competition from (non-unionized) independent schools. (State law does not allow compulsory membership, and since 2018 a U.S. Supreme Court case has prohibited "agency fee" assessments on teachers who decline to join the union.)

Understandably, teachers' unions have worked for years to shape education policy by controlling state legislatures. That's notably true in Vermont, where the VT-NEA essentially owns the Democratic Party on matters of interest to the union. It has also enlisted the support of a wide range of organizations by supporting progressive causes, like private sector unionization, battling against climate change, expanding gun control, and adopting single payer health care (for everybody else).

One may disagree with the union's positions, but it has every right to work to advance the interests of its members. But here's the startling news, reported in a July 8 Wall Street Journal editorial ("The Teachers Unions Go Woke"). Says the editorial, "the national teachers unions are adopting woke values and pressing them into K-12 curriculums across the U.S."

As an example, "the NEA held its annual meeting last week and the measures approved by delegates deserve broader attention. One calls for the union to support and lead campaigns that 'result in increasing the implementation of culturally responsive education, critical race theory and ethnic (Native people, Asian, Black, Latin (o/a/x), Middle Eastern, North African, and Pacific Islander) Studies curriculum in pre-K-12 and higher education.' ...[This ideology] teaches that a person is defined above all else by

race, gender and sexual orientation, and that American institutions are designed to ensure white supremacy and ‘the patriarchy’”.

“Another delegate-approved measure calls for the union to issue a study criticizing ‘empire, white supremacy, anti-blackness, anti-Indigeneity, racism, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy (!), capitalism, ableism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of power and oppression at the intersections of our society.’”

The Journal concludes that “No one is opposed to teaching about America’s difficult racial history, including the evils of slavery and Jim Crow. What parents are awakening to is that their children are being told the lie that America has made little or no racial progress and therefore its legal, economic and political systems must be turned upside down...Parents have a every right, even a duty, to fight back against this invasion of progressive politics in their schools.”

I daresay that many of VT-NEA’s teacher members are not supportive of their national union’s march down this ideological path. But where it does appear in our public schools, what is the remedy for parents and citizens who disagree?

“Fighting back” to recapture the public school curriculum is an exhausting process, largely dependent on overmatched citizen volunteers. A better remedy is for the legislature to give parents who don’t want their children fed such ideology in their classrooms the right to choose other avenues for their children’s education, taking with them a sizable portion of the equalized per pupil cost of education in the local public school system.

Independent schools that offer a more balanced curriculum, including curricula built upon moral and religious values, will attract empowered parents and children. Public schools that lose pupils because of radical indoctrination will seek to regain their market share (and lost union dues) by making their offerings more appealing.

Some activists, committed to a government-enforced public school monopoly and infused with the new radicalism promoted by the NEA, will find this a terrifying prospect. As for others - teachers, parents and citizens who seek to preserve what is good about America and essential for the success of its young people - what’s not to like?

*- John McClaughry is vice president of the Ethan Allen Institute*

[https://www.ethanallen.org/the\\_teachers\\_union\\_s\\_new\\_pupil\\_indoctrination\\_plan](https://www.ethanallen.org/the_teachers_union_s_new_pupil_indoctrination_plan)

## Commentary: Climate Council Wants “A River of Money”

*By Rob Roper*

The Vermont Climate Council, charged with coming up with a plan to reduce Vermont’s greenhouse gas emissions to 26% below 2005 levels by 2025, 40% below 1990 levels by 2030, and 80% below by 2050, is finally putting forward some details about what policies it will take to do this. While they have not yet discussed many specifics of how to pay for these programs, member Richard Cowart summed it up at their July 26 meeting saying “a river of money” needs to be diverted into the cause. A river indeed!

The Council’s broad outline of a plan requires either subsidizing at taxpayer expense or mandating at homeowners’ expense the retrofitting of hundreds of thousands of homes, businesses, and municipal buildings for weatherization, electrification, and

transitioning away from fossil fuel air and water heating systems. It requires increasing the number of electric vehicles on our roads from 4000 to 46,000 by 2025 largely via subsidizing the purchases. It calls for building bike paths, moving communities out of flood zones via taxpayer-funded real estate buy-outs, not to mention the cost of building the electricity generation and transmission infrastructure needed to meet all of this newly created demand.

Exactly how unrealistic is this? Let's look at just electric vehicle component of this plan. The first commercial hybrid electric vehicles came out in the US in 2000. In the twenty-one years following, Vermont's EV fleet grew from zero to about 4000 (7% of the total) – this with the help of considerable federal and state financial incentives and encouragement. Now the Climate Council says we have to have 46,000 EVs on Vermont roads by 2025, one out of every four vehicle purchases over that timeframe.

According to [driveelectricvt.com](http://driveelectricvt.com), Vermont state subsidy amounts for fully electric vehicles currently range from \$2500 - \$4000 and from \$1500 to \$3000 for hybrids depending upon one's income. In between December 2019 and October 2020, the state handed out \$1,100,000 worth of such subsidies. A similar amount, perhaps a bit more, has been spent between October 2020 and today. So, we have already been spending between a million and a million and a half of taxpayers' dollars on EV subsidies per year. Assuming each future purchased EV comes with an average \$3000 state taxpayer subsidy, that would mean we'd have to up the spending on EV subsidies to \$42 million per year over three years. But, if higher subsidies are necessary to motivate so many people into a car they otherwise would not buy, who knows how high that number has to go to be effective?

As for weatherization, the Climate Council says we have to ramp up activity by a factor of 5.5 to meet the 2030 goals, from 27,000 currently weatherized homes to 148,000. Efficiency Vermont, the primary entity tasked with weatherizing homes, already has a current annual budget of just under \$54 million. 5.5 times that would be nearly \$300 million per year.

The same chart shared by the Council indicates that 56,000 Vermont households will have to replace their air heating and cooling systems with heat pumps by 2025, and 186,000 will have to by 2030. 40,000 will have to replace their water heating systems by 2025, and over 190,000 by 2030. How much will this cost, and who is going to pay for it? Moreover, how is the state going to force ostensibly free, private citizens into making these "choices." Outright bans? Prohibitive fees? Higher taxes?

Richard Cowart's breezy observation, "There's a river of money out there, and we need to redirect it, where it goes," is easier said than done. The Climate Council are not the only ones trying to redirect rivers of money. The state's public pensions are in crisis, currently consuming over 12% of all General Fund spending and growing, and the unions want a river of money to fix this. Let's Grow Kids is pushing for a massive expansion of birth to five childcare, K-12 advocates are eager to reform pupil weighting formulae which will come with a hefty price tag, our state college system is floundering financially.

While the Climate Council and the Agency of Natural Resources have broad regulatory authority under the GWSA, they do not have the power to raise taxes. The legislature will have to do this part, and 2022 is an election year. Will the legislature be on board with "redirecting" rivers of money away from these projects?

More importantly, I'm willing to bet a large majority of voting taxpayers' priority amongst this smorgasbord of spending choices is to keep their money for themselves with

no interest in seeing it “redirected” away from their pay checks, savings accounts, wallets, and household budgets for the purposes of putting their unemployed neighbor in a Prius.

- *Rob Roper is president of the Ethan Allen Institute.*

[https://www.ethanallen.org/climate\\_council\\_wants\\_a\\_river\\_of\\_money](https://www.ethanallen.org/climate_council_wants_a_river_of_money)

## Events

**August 6.** Vermont Liberty Network is hosting an event featuring K Carl Smith, founder of "Frederick Douglass Republicans," to speak in Montpelier on August 6 at the Capitol Plaza at 7 PM on the topic of “A Black perspective on Critical Race Theory and the new segregation in Vermont schools.” Get tickets at [vtliberty.net](http://vtliberty.net).

**October 2, EAI’s Jefferson Day Celebration at the President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site (Plymouth Notch).** Amity Shlaes will speak on "Jefferson and Coolidge." Each year since 1993 the Institute has sponsored a Jefferson Day event in the month of his birth (April). Due to concerns about Covid, we postponed the event this year and have now scheduled it for October. Questions about the event can be directed to John McClaghry, [john@ethanallen.org](mailto:john@ethanallen.org).

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## News & Views

**Why Act 250 Needs Real Reform.** ... “Lefgren failed to get his Act 250 permit after six years of trying, including a failed appeal to the Vermont Supreme Court. His property is now for sale, and he has left the state, according to Dean Goulet of Dunrovin Real Estate in Royalton, who is handling the sale. ‘I always thought we welcomed people in who were responsible and this gentleman certainly was,’ Goulet said. ‘He was trying to create a tourist-type business with a deli where he would sell Vermont products and maple syrup.... The state of Vermont ruined this man.’” [BFP, 7/22/21](#) (Worth reading the whole story.)

**Entrepreneurial Regulatory Barriers:** A Cato Institute study (#916, 5/5/21) ranked the states for seven varieties of regulatory barriers facing startup businesses. Vermont ranked 37th (New Hampshire: 5th). Startup respondents gave Vermont a D for ease of starting a business, D+ for labor and hiring laws, and C+ for licensing laws.

**Vermont Ranks 2nd Highest for Monthly Grocery Costs.** The study uses each state’s most populous study as a proxy for the rest of the state, through the cost-of-living database Numbeo. The average Burlington is estimated to spend \$497 per month on groceries, the second-highest food costs in the nation behind residents in Honolulu (Hawaii), which pays \$557 per month. The national average for monthly grocery costs is \$356. ([Burlington Free Press, 7/28/21](#)).

**Ouch!** “Freedom made New Hampshire an economic marvel. Recognizing that people are free to live wherever they want, state policymakers for decades have focused on making the Granite State as attractive as possible.” “It has worked beautifully. New Hampshire’s economic growth has surpassed every other New England state’s, and the national average, since the late 1970s. With a booming economy came a growing population, which has enhanced the state’s quality of life and kept New Hampshire from becoming Vermont — a dying state that pays people to move there.” – Drew Cline, Josiah Bartlett Center (NH), 7/12/21

**Peculiar Vermont Rankings:** Becker’s Hospital Review released its rankings of the states for business in 2021. “The ‘life, health and inclusion’ category includes metrics on the fight against COVID-19, healthcare in general and corporate support for inclusiveness. The top state in this category is Vermont; the lowest is Arizona.” “The ‘workforce’ category measures the educational attainment of each state’s working-age population, the rate of college-educated workers arriving or leaving the state, and the state’s concentration of science, technology, engineering and math workers, among other metrics. The top state in this category is Texas; the last is Vermont.” (Becker’s, July 2021)

**Lawmakers Want White Vermonters to Pay Slave Reparations.** "Ultimately, what I believe needs to happen is that white people need to take responsibility for this oppressive system," Vermont state Rep. Hal Colston said of both governmental and community-organized efforts." – [BFP, 7/26/21](#)

**Evidence of God.** “An electric car owned by Rep. Tim Briglin (D- Thetford) caught fire while charging and parked in his driveway. Police say the fire was caused by electrical failure. Briglin, chair of the House Energy & Technology Committee, was the lead sponsor of Act 153, the 2019 law requiring Vermont to reduce carbon emissions 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. He also has supported bills subsidizing electric cars and charging stations.” - [Vermont Daily Chronicle, 7/3/21](#)

**Montana’s Model for Cutting Healthcare Costs in Half.** “Gov. Greg Gianforte signed a bill that promises to expand a health care model known as [Direct Patient Care](#) (DPC). Increasingly fed up with red tape, paperwork and meddlesome third-party rules... a growing number of physicians are opting to bypass both government and insurance companies.... The greatest drag on the DPC model is the threat of government red tape and regulations at the federal and state levels, as well as pressure from those with a vested interest in the high-cost, less-than-transparent status quo. Montana’s new law clears the decks of a lot of that rigmarole, and it goes further than any other state so far by opening the door for dentists, mental healthcare providers and other specialists to offer direct options to their patients.” [FEE, 7/13/21](#)

**Arizona Passes a Flat Income Tax.** “This week Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey will sign a 2.5% flat tax, a moment that will define his legacy.... Arizona currently taxes income under a progressive rate structure, starting at 2.59% up to 4.5%.... ‘Every Arizonan—no matter how much they make—wins with this legislation,’ Mr. Ducey said. ‘It will protect small businesses from a devastating 77 percent tax increase, it ensures working families

and all Arizona taxpayers get to spend their money how they choose, and it will help our state stay competitive so we can continue to attract good-paying jobs.” [WSJ, 6/28/21](#)

**As the Vermont Climate Council Schemes...** “Note how, despite fantastical promises about the economic benefits of electric cars or green jobs, it always seems to require uncountable trillions of dollars for taxpayer-financed Green New Deals and an extra couple of hundred bucks on your household heating bill to get from here to there.” Joseph C. Sternberg, [WSJ, 7/15/21](#)

**Fascism?** “People argue about the definition of fascism all the time, but one critical element is the suppression of freedom of expression and dissent by the government and private institutions operating in tandem. It is much tougher to make the argument, “Stop treating this like government censorship, Facebook is a private company and private entity, it can decide what material is acceptable and what material should be removed,” when Facebook starts making those decisions based on communications from the federal government.” – Jim Geraghty, National Review, 7/16/21

**The NEA Speaks:** At its recent national representative assembly, “with the opportunity to indoctrinate students in radical-left ideology on the line, the National Education Association put its members’ money where its radical-left leadership’s mouth is. New Business Item 39 [a plan to promote critical race theory in all 50 states and 14,000 local school districts] will be backed by \$127,600 in union dues. Another NEA resolution, New Business Item 2, puts \$56,500 toward political opposition research targeting activists who oppose teaching schoolchildren collective racial guilt, singling out the Heritage Foundation by name.” – Michael Watson, Capital Research Center, July 12, 2021.

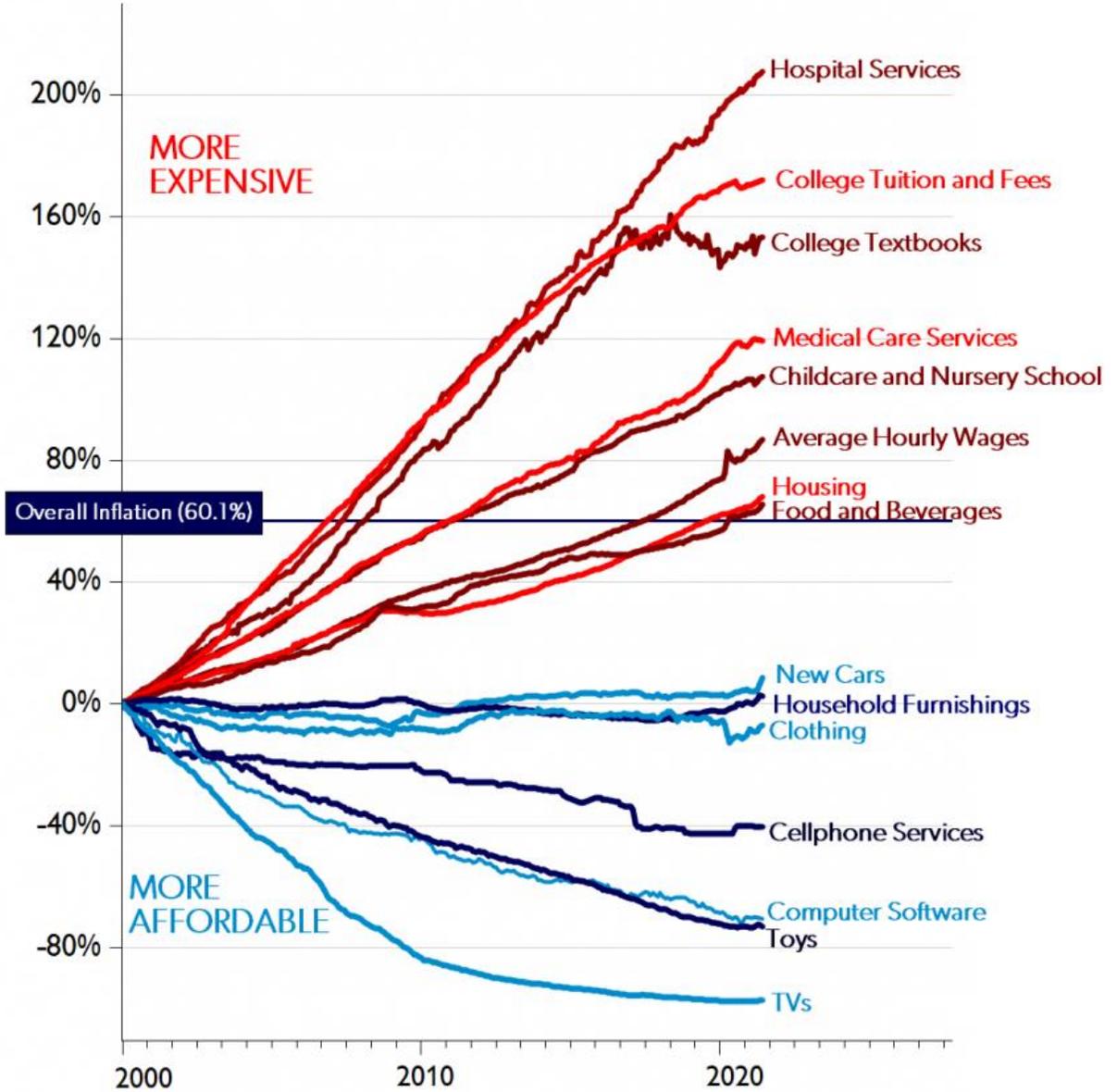
**Race-Based Preferences.** “Mr. Biden sells his [racial equity] agenda as taking America into the future. But allocating government funds or privileges by race is a step back to an uglier past. It moves away from the ideal espoused by Martin Luther King Jr. that Americans should be judged by their character—not their skin color... If applied on the scale Mr. Biden hopes, America would become a nation of groups competing for racial spoils and defined outcomes rather than seeking equal opportunity for everyone.” - WSJ 6/30/21

**California Grocery Chain to Pay \$5.1 million for Violating Global Warming Solutions Act.** Albertson’s has agreed to pay \$5.1 million to settle allegations it violated portions of the California’s 2006 Global Warming Solutions Act. The California GWSA authorizes the Refrigerant Management Program for “reducing greenhouse gas emissions from industrial refrigerant systems.” Refrigeration systems in retail food use refrigerant chemicals which trap heat in the atmosphere even more than carbon dioxide. Perhaps the Vermont Climate Council will suggest something similar under our GWSA come December? ([California Air Resource Board, 7/14/21](#)).

**Chart of the Century.** “Blue lines = prices subject to free-market forces. Red lines = prices subject to regulatory capture by government. Food and beverages are debatable either way. Conclusion: remind me why socialism is so great again.” [AEI, 7/13/21](#)

# Price Changes: January 2000 to June 2021

## Selected US Consumer Goods and Services, Wages



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Carpe Diem **AEI**

## **Book of the Month: Unsettled**

*What Climate Science Tells Us, What It Doesn't, and Why It Matters*

By Steven E. Koonin

Dallas: Ben Bella , 2021

241 pages.

Anyone with an interest in climate science, and especially anyone interested in what happens to that science on its tortuous path to the policy makers and the general public, seriously needs to get acquainted with Steven E. Koonin.

Koonin is a physics prodigy who entered CalTech at 16, earned his doctorate at MIT, and taught computational physics, managed enormous research projects, and served as provost at CalTech for almost thirty years. Koonin's remarkable career also includes chairing JASON, a high level group that advises federal agencies on science and technology, affiliations with five national laboratories, and serving as Undersecretary and chief scientist of President Obama's Energy Department.

His new landmark book is entitled *Unsettled: What Climate Science Tells Us, What It Doesn't, and Why It Matters*. His goal, he says, was to critically examine the actual data offered to support the foreboding narrative of human-caused catastrophic climate change. In addition, he incisively examines – and deplores - the transformation of actual science into a frightening narrative about Earth's climate future.

Koonin agrees that the Earth has warmed around one degree C since the tailing off of the Little Ice Age around 1850, and is likely to be another one degree warmer by the end of this century, much of that increase caused by human activity including greenhouse gas emissions. But he is alarmed at scientifically insupportable predictions of approaching climate catastrophes.

For example, he shows that a report of temperature extremes in the contiguous U.S. actually shows “no significant trend over the past century nor over the past forty years...”

Predictions of frightening increases in the global sea level? “Even if we were the culprit and ceased all emissions tomorrow, global sea level would continue to rise” – on the order of 3 millimeters a year, conforming to a natural sixty year cycle.

The projected negative impact of a 3°C temperature increase on the global economy by 2100? Actually, the most defensible estimate is three percent or less - four hundredths of a percent per year.

Koonin's analysis of the data can be demanding for readers with little scientific background, but the really important message of *Unsettled* is this: “It's clear that media, politicians and often the assessment reports themselves blatantly mispresent what the science says about climate and catastrophes. Those failures indict the scientists who write and too-casually review the reports, the reporters who uncritically repeat them, the editors who allow that to happen, the activists and their organizations who fan the fires of alarm, and the experts whose public silence endorses the deception”.

As for activist organizations, “If you believe there is a ‘climate emergency’, have built an organization on that premise, and rely upon your donors’ continuing commitment to the cause, projecting urgency is crucial. Hence statements like ‘the climate crisis is immense – we must be daring and courageous in response’ (from the [350.org](http://350.org) website) or ‘climate change is one of the most devastating problems that humanity has ever faced – and the clock is running out’ (from the Union of Concerned Scientists website). It's

hardly in your best interest to tell your donors that the climate shows no sign of being broken or that projections of future disasters rely on models of dubious validity.” After a careful reading of Unsettled, thinking people are likely to believe that they are being fed insupportable exaggerations both by ignorant and sometimes corrupted producers and translators of The Science, and interests that are cynically promoting climate panic to advance their own economic and political fortunes. Steven Koonin is so eminently qualified, and so far removed from any ideological contamination, that his findings and message are exceptionally credible and convincing.

Reviewed by John McClaughry (This is an abbreviation of a longer commentary that can be found at [ethanallen.org](http://ethanallen.org))

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## The Final Word

### **August Survey: Paying for Climate Change Policy**

How much money per year would you be willing to pay through higher taxes or fees to support the programs/goals recommended by the Vermont Climate Council under the Global Warming Solutions Act?

- Sliding scale: \$0 to \$1000

Take the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Pay4GWSA>

### **July Survey Results: VT’s Healthcare Future**

Should the state extend its healthcare management contract with OneCare Vermont for 5 years beginning in 2022, or pull the plug on the program?

- Extend the contract. 0% (0)
- Pull the plug. 100% (32)