

November 28, 2013

AMS Survey Shows No Consensus on Global Warming

By Joseph Bast¹

The release of *Climate Change Reconsidered II: Physical Science*² makes it clear that there is no scientific consensus on the causes or consequences of climate change. Some 50 scientists from 15 countries, citing nearly 4,000 peer-reviewed studies, concluded that the human impact on climate is smaller than the United Nations' IPCC claims and that natural climate variability is the predominant cause of observed changes in weather and climate.

Only 39.5 percent of AMS members who responded to the survey say they believe man-made global warming is dangerous. That is not a “consensus.”

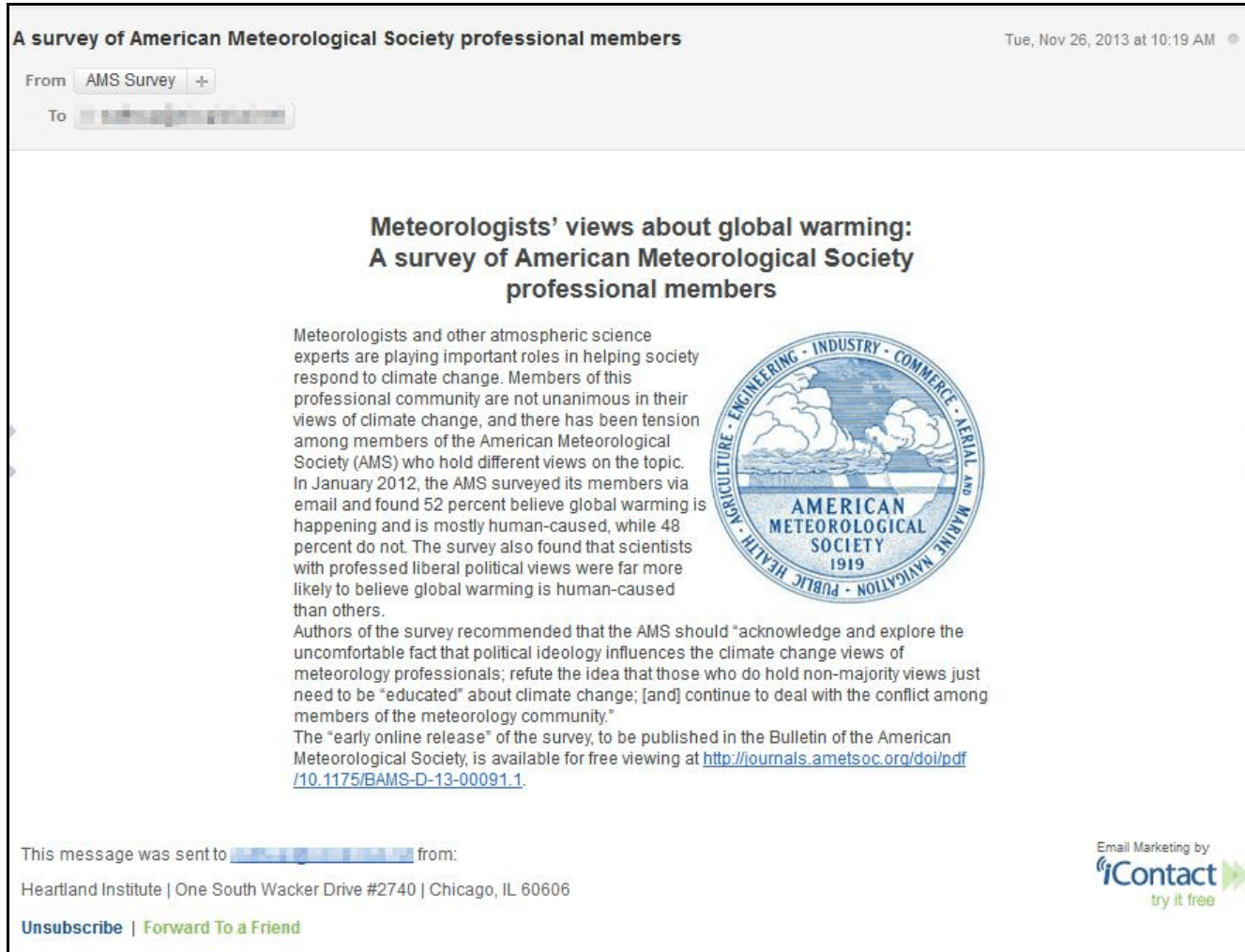
The next step is to take a more direct aim at the belief, which unfortunately is widespread even in the scientific community, that a scientific consensus nevertheless exists. With that in mind, earlier this week The Heartland Institute widely distributed a brief announcement of a new report from the American Meteorological Society (AMS) interpreting a 2012 survey of AMS members. Our email notice appears on the top of the next page. Note that it quotes from the report and provides a link to the document on the AMS Web site.

Perhaps predictably, Keith L. Seitter, executive director of AMS, has posted a comment objecting to our message. (He did not bother contacting anyone at The Heartland Institute.) His comments appear below our message, and is followed by some brief responses to his objections. But the most important message here should not be lost: only 39.5 percent of AMS members who responded to the survey say the believe man-made global warming is dangerous. That is not

¹ Joseph L. Bast is president of The Heartland Institute and author or editor of several publications on climate change, including three volumes of *Climate Change Reconsidered*. This essay originally appeared on The Heartland Institute's blog, [www.SomewhatReasonable.com](http://blog.heartland.org/2013/11/ams-survey-shows-no-consensus-on-global-warming/), on November 28, 2013, <http://blog.heartland.org/2013/11/ams-survey-shows-no-consensus-on-global-warming/>

² Idso, C.D., Carter R.M., and Singer S.F. 2013 (Eds.) *Climate Change Reconsidered II: Physical Science*. Chicago, IL: The Heartland Institute.

a “consensus.”



Response by Keith L. Seitter, AMS Executive Director, dated November 27, 2013:

Earlier this week, the Heartland Institute appears to have sent an extensive e-mail blast with what is more or less a press release for a paper that will appear in an upcoming issue of BAMS entitled “Meteorologists’ Views about Global Warming: A Survey of American Meteorological Society Professional Members” (in full disclosure, I am a coauthor on this paper). A disturbing aspect of this e-mail is that it seems some effort was placed in making it appear to have been sent by AMS. It was sent from an e-mail account with AMS in the name (though not from the “ametsoc.org” domain) and featured the AMS logo prominently (used without permission from AMS). Only in the fine print at the bottom was it clear that this apparently came from the Heartland Institute. The text of the e-mail reports results from the study far differently than I would, leaving an

impression that is at odds with how I would characterize those results.

If you got this Heartland Institute e-mail, or if you have read articles or blog posts related to this study, my suggestion is simple. Rather than take someone else's interpretation of the survey results, read the paper yourself and draw your own conclusions. It is freely available here as an Early Online Release.

A difference between the AMS and some organizations is the transparency and scientific integrity with which we operate. This survey was conducted to satisfy scientific curiosity on an important topic and the results are published for all to see. This is the way science is meant to work.

Heartland's Reply to Seitter:

We chose to send this notice using an email address that was descriptive of the message – “AMS Survey [mailto:2013AMSSurvey@gmail.com]” – rather than an address with a Heartland domain to maximize the open rate, a common practice in email marketing. There was no attempt to deceive recipients about who sent the message: “This message was sent to [recipient] from Heartland Institute” and our address appear at the bottom of the message.

We illustrated the message with the same AMS logo that appears on the cover of the AMS report. That, too, is common practice: Heartland's logo and those of other groups are used countless times without permission in emails, on blogs and web sites, and in print publications from other organizations. If the AMS stands by its report, it's difficult to understand why they would object to having their logo appear on an announcement of their own research.

So why the objection? Seitter says “The text of the e-mail reports results from the study far differently than I would, leaving an impression that is at odds with how I would characterize those results.” Indeed it does. This is all about “spin” and not, as Seitter says later in his comment, “transparency and scientific integrity.”

The AMS survey found only 52 percent of the members who responded to the survey believe the warming of the past 150 years was man-made. Oddly, that finding, which appears in Table 1 of the report (on the very last page of the pre-publication version), is not mentioned in the report's commentary, an oversight we corrected with our announcement. The survey also found that members who self-describe as being liberals are far more likely than other members to believe this, which also isn't plainly stated in the report.

It's also odd that the report doesn't reveal what percentage of members believe man-made global warming is harmful, even though that question appeared in the survey and is at the core of the debate between “alarmists” and “skeptics.” From an earlier publication of the survey's results, though, it appears that 76 percent of those who believe in man-made global warming also believe it is “very harmful” or “somewhat harmful,” so we can estimate that 39.5 percent of all AMS members say they believe man-made global warming is dangerous. That is somewhat less than a

“consensus.”

The AMS report doesn't reveal whether all or just nearly all of the AMS members who believe man-made global warming is dangerous self-identify as being liberals, but since it identifies political ideology as the strongest or second strongest factor in determining a scientist's position on this matter, one has to suspect this is the case.

If the AMS wants to act with transparency and scientific integrity, it should honestly report all of the results of this survey and not hide those that reveal the absence of consensus. Until they rise to that level, we have little choice but to do our best to correct their errors.

Please check my math and let me know if I got this wrong.

If you are an AMS member, I hope you will ask Seitter why the 52 percent finding wasn't deemed worthy of comment, and why the percentage of all respondents who believe man-made global warming is dangerous is not reported anywhere in this report. And maybe why the views of 39.5 percent of AMS members dominate its public statements on this controversial issue.