

Webisode 57DHYAFZZFDA February 24 2026 Americans love science! She found it exhausting

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To explain how irreversible the damage was becoming

They had lost research in weeks long

Whole labs had closed and decades long

Careers ended. Nothing to do with the quality

Or importance of the research itself! Normally

Arbitrary and needlessly cruel ideology

Would not decide what facts were needed

And important and life savingly heeded

Political actions were needlessly cruel and arbitrary

In Illinois, when science became the enemy!

People who voted Democratic in the 2024 presidential election

tended to hold a very different view than Republicans

Between 2023 and 2025, the proportion of Democrats of the opinion

that the U.S. is losing ground in science compared with other nations

jumped by 28 percentage points. Two thirds of Democrats now hold this view.

Republicans are more positive about the country's standing in science, though!

In 2022 and 2023 the difference between Democratic and Republican opinion

was modest and within 7 percentage points in both groups' responses!

In 2026 Trump cut federal funding for science.

Slashing millions in grants across myriad disciplines

and walked back its own research and regulations based on science,
particularly in the areas of climate change and health and medicine .

Meanwhile experts have warned of a "brain drain," with researchers choosing

to study or live overseas. Despite these cuts, the majority of Americans losing,

84 percent thought federal investments in science aimed at advancement

of knowledge were worthwhile. Republican voters, however, were more likely than

their left-leaning peers to be open to private companies playing a key role in science!

Americans' trust in science and scientists remains broadly strong but not as great

as it was before the COVID pandemic. During 2020 and 2021, public trust cratered.

And while it has recovered somewhat, it remains lower than it was before then.

Still, the American people consistently ranked scientists among them

Thought the most trustworthy groups in society for the past 10 years.

"Scientists have consistently ranked toward the top in terms of trust for years

while elected officials generally were ranked toward the bottom,"

What Happened in Chicago When Science Became the Enemy

Thirteen months into the second Trump administration, science,

medicine and public health have been hijacked by a cadre of grifters

and ideologues and by the politicians in obvious thrall to both politicians.

Federal institutions have been all but dismantled. Researchers have been defunded

on masse and the universities that support them deliberately destabilized.

Discourse on crucial scientific questions and key public health challenges

has been stifled. And, along the way, trust has been broken between scientists,

the nation's leaders — and the people that both are supposed to serve.

It's tempting to view this undoing as temporary. Americans love science

and revere innovation , almost as a rule, and politicians of every stripe have

spent the better part of a century promoting and protecting both. However

imperfect the resulting system was, hardly a modern convenience exists that can't be traced back to it: central air conditioning, the internet and ChatGPT; polio vaccines, statins and weight loss drugs; the human genome sequence and CRISPR gene editing . The National Institutes of Health alone generates about \$2.50 in economic returns for every dollar of investment. It's also the largest government-funded biomedical research agency in the world, and until recently was the envy of scientists across the globe. The president's attacks on this legacy have been relentless and all-encompassing. He has turned the federal health department over to Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the nation's most prominent anti-vaxxer. For months, President Trump's Office of Management and Budget all but froze operations at the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. The Department of Government Efficiency , or DOGE, fired thousands of civil servants from The Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in a process that was wildly disorganized , frequently unlawful and needlessly cruel. Global health initiatives were also eviscerated. Stacked against these measures, the administration's explanations, which focus on cutting waste and eliminating so-called woke politics from science have been inadequate and disingenuous . It can be difficult to imagine a future in which American science does not prevail. But, as the president's many critics have warned, the C.D.C., F.D.A. and N.I.H. will be far more difficult to rebuild than they have been to destroy especially if their intended public lose all faith in them or forget why they existed in the first place. Trump seems to understand as much. Top officials have taken pains to describe the nation's scientific bodies as corrupt and ineffective and the nation's scientists as elitist and excessively woke. In response the president of the public health nonprofit Resolve to Save Lives. Says "We actually know a lot about how to make America healthier. But very little of that knowledge is in line with what the current administration has done so far." Nowhere is this disconnect on fuller display than in the long war against H.I.V. Forty years ago, the infection was a mystery and a death sentence. Today, thanks to a combination of biomedical breakthroughs and boots-on-the-ground public health (with testing, education, and social safety nets), it is a chronic but manageable condition H I V now really only flourishes among society's most marginalized groups. The first Trump administration vowed to finally end the American H.I.V. epidemic, no later than 2030, by doubling down on prevention efforts in the hardest hit communities. For Trump 1 point zero and the Biden Administration it clearly paid off! Transmission rates are down in the targeted ZIP codes. Racial health gaps are narrowing! Because prevention is cheaper than treatment, money is being saved. Trump 2 point zero seems determined to reverse course anyway. On March 20 2025 a researcher at Northwestern University in Chicago became uncertain when her work was caught in the cross hairs of Trump. Illinois State officials had expressed interest in partnering with her to expand the Prep-4-Teens program, and she had just applied for yet another N.I.H. grant based on an agency's own stated interest in using implementation science to conquer H.I.V. On the other hand, though, hope seemed a delusional response to the events of the past year. Word was, new grant applications would ultimately be decided on not by fellow scientists, as had always been the case, but by political appointees who had taken over the N.I.H. The researcher had spent nearly all of her adult life cultivating expertise in disease prevention, Despite the uncertainty, the male project coordinator working with her is still pursuing a research career. "I love this work!" He knew the risks, knew that he was probably on a path of deep uncertainty and he would find neither

glory nor gratitude on the other side of that struggle. But the way he saw it, resilience could be an identity, too. “It gave me a career path, being mentored by a top level research scientist. This path has now essentially vanished for all young scientists. Private Industry does not train scientists as well. Who will train what is left of the younger generation of scientists?”