

Federal, State Officials Respond to ‘Climate Change’ Controversy



At a hearing in Tallahassee, state Sen. Jeff Clemens, D-Lake Worth, tried to get a state emergency management official to say “climate change.” (House photo by Mark Foley.)

By [Tristram Korten](#)

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Florida and federal officials responded this week to news that state agencies in Gov. Rick Scott’s administration suppressed use of the terms “climate change” and “global warming.”

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U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor, D-Tampa, Tuesday questioned why written testimony from a state official at a hearing in Washington, D.C., involving climate change didn’t contain

the words climate change.

Castor’s colleague, U.S. Representative Ted Deutch, D-Boca Raton, tweeted a photo of himself with “climate change” written on tape covering his mouth and the hashtag: #DontCensorScience.

On Thursday, state Sen. Jeff Clemens, D-Lake Worth, tried to get a state emergency management official to say “climate change” at a hearing in Tallahassee. The official declined.

The issue is in the public eye following [reports this month](#) by the Florida Center for Investigative Reporting, published in newspapers statewide, that employees and contractors at several Florida agencies, including the departments of Environmental Protection, Transportation, and Health, were told not to use those terms in official documents. Gov. Scott has denied the reports.

In the wake of those stories, the Federal Emergency Management Agency warned U.S. states that they may not qualify for federal disaster preparedness funds if they do not have a plan in place to mitigate the effects of climate change.

FEMA's State Mitigation Plan — which will go into effect in 2016 — and the Environmental Protection Agency's national Clean Power Plan are part of the Obama administration's efforts to combat the effects of climate change.

On Tuesday, [U.S. Rep. Castor grilled Florida Public Service Commission Chairman Art Graham](#) at an Energy and Commerce subcommittee hearing on the national Clean Power Plan.

"Mr. Graham, it recently came to light that Gov. Rick Scott has an unwritten policy that bans the use of the terms 'climate change' and 'global warming,'" Castor said. "Nowhere in your testimony does it use the terms 'climate change' or 'global warming.' Is that a product of Gov. Scott's unwritten policy?"

"Absolutely not," Graham answered.

Meanwhile, in Tallahassee on Thursday, state Sen. Clemens asked Bryan Koon, director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, if he was aware of the new FEMA rules "[dealing with climate change](#)"?

Koon said he was aware, and added: "Future versions of our mitigation plan will be required to have language discussing that issue."

"What issue is that?" Clemens asked.

"The issue you mentioned earlier," Koon replied.

Clemens told FCIR after this exchange that he wasn't sure if Koon was joking.

When asked if Koon was joking, a spokesman responded: "The Florida Division of Emergency Management does not have any policy which prohibits the use of the words 'climate change.'"

"It would be fun to try and get a different department head to say 'climate change' every week," Clemens added.