

Business & Education News – May 11, 2005

The junkman climbs to the top



In the policy battles that pit good science versus “junk science”, Steven J. Milloy has been an active foot soldier for well over a decade. Milloy, an adjunct scholar at the Cato Institute, a commentator for FoxNews.com, and the creator of JunkScience.com, seems to have finally earned the respect of the science establishment—he was chosen as a judge for the 2004 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Journalism Awards: Online Category. AAAS, a professional society devoted to general science, describes the award as the “pinnacle of achievement” for professional science writers and journalists.

Milloy, who calls himself “The Junkman”, proudly states that he was a AAAS judge in his biographies on [JunkScience.com](#) and at the [Competitive Enterprise Institute](#), a right-leaning think tank devoted to free-market politics. However, AAAS does not list Milloy as a [judge](#) in last year’s competition.

According to AAAS spokesperson Ginger Pinholster, Milloy was invited to be a judge but quickly notified the other panelists that he had conflicts of interest due to his affiliation with the Cato Institute, another libertarian think tank. “It was just kind of a snafu, and he had a nice lunch on us,” she said in a phone message. “We’ve already dealt with it. This is a sponsored, nonprofit program, and I just want it to go away.”

“This is somewhat like discovering that Karl Rove [President Bush’s chief political adviser] was a judge in a contest for political journalism,” says Seth Borenstein, a national correspondent who covers the environment, science, and health for the Washington, D.C., bureau of Knight Ridder.

“Unbelievable!” declares Stanton Glantz, a professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, and a documenter of big tobacco’s history. “He sold himself to industry years ago to try and get people to believe that any research funded by tobacco companies was sound science.”

Milloy’s emergence as a controversial science pundit with close connections to a popular news network is a reflection of how politicized—and some would say propagandized—science reporting has become in the United States. Milloy did not return calls or emails for this story.



The Legacy Tobacco Documents Library

While at TASSC, Milloy often worked with tobacco company officials. This letterhead features the names of many prominent scientists, including Lester Lave of Carnegie Mellon University. When contacted, Lave said that he later withdrew his name from TASSC because he felt the group was not even-handed or accurate in the issues it chose to attack. [View larger image](#)



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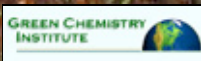
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According to his biography, Milloy is well trained for his job. He has an undergraduate degree in science and a master's degree in biostatistics from Johns Hopkins University, a law degree from the University of Baltimore, and a master's degree in law from Georgetown University.

On his JunkScience.com site, Milloy regularly links to the latest scientific studies and news reports. He often adds his personal analysis, cheerleading for studies of which he approves, while pillorying those he disdains. Among his dislikes is Canada's leading medical journal, the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, which he [advised](#) "to develop a reputation as a solid medical journal" and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences' (NIEHS) *Environmental Health Perspectives*, which he [called](#) a "health-science oriented journal".

However, his affiliation with the Cato Institute almost ended in 1999 after he posted several obituaries on JunkScience.com and created a media uproar. When Sen. John Chafee (R-RI) died, Milloy wrote that Chafee "too often acted like a Democrat" but that the senator would luckily be replaced on the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works by current committee chair Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK). He then praised Inhofe as a politician "who has shown courage" in opposing U.S. EPA regulations and the Kyoto climate treaty. Milloy's obituary was even harsher for David Rall, a former director of NIEHS, who died in an automobile accident. "Scratch one junk scientist," Milloy wrote.

A smoky trail of tobacco money

Much of Milloy's earlier history can be found online at the [Legacy Tobacco Documents Library](#) archived at the University of California, San Francisco. This database contains 7 million documents related to advertising, manufacturing, marketing, sales, and scientific research of tobacco products. These papers, many of which were collected by Glantz, [show](#) that Milloy began JunkScience.com in about 1996 while he was president of the nonprofit Environmental Policy Analysis Network. The network had gained some fame for a report that questioned EPA's risk assessment methods, which captured the attention of Max Boot, an editor at *The Wall Street Journal*. When Boot wrote an editorial trumpeting the report and criticizing EPA regulations, he sent Milloy a [draft](#) to check for mistakes.

In March 1997, Milloy became president of the Advancement of Sound Science Coalition (TASSC) a nonprofit organization founded to "promote the use of sound science." A [letter](#) in 1993 from the communications firm APCO Associates Inc. to tobacco giant Philip Morris USA explains TASSC's origin. At that time, APCO was forming TASSC as a media relations strategy "to expand and assist Philip Morris in its efforts with issues in targeted states in 1994." APCO then [orchestrated a media launch](#) for TASSC, which began in secondary markets outside of Washington, D.C., and New York City to avoid "cynical reporters from major media." An [editorial](#) at the time praised TASSC as a "grass roots organization".

On Internal Revenue Service (IRS) forms, TASSC lists its mission as "education of public on environment and research and production of reports on environmental policy." TASSC operated from an office in the Dupont Circle area of Washington,

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Expanding TASSC into Europe ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#))



D.C., and employed a secretary at a different location one block away until 1999. Later, IRS forms show that TASSC moved to Milloy's residence in Potomac, Md., where he is now the only paid employee. Since Milloy became president, the nonprofit has taken in \$996,717 in contributions and has paid Milloy \$512,001. IRS documents in 2004 show that TASSC took in \$53,500 in contributions, suffered a small loss from trading more than 1000 shares in ExxonMobil stock, and paid Milloy \$126,000 for 15 hours of work per week as president.

The IRS forms do not list the donors for TASSC, but ExxonMobil reports donating \$40,000 to TASSC between 2000 and 2003. The oil company also contributed \$50,000 to the Free Enterprise Action Institute, another nonprofit registered at Milloy's home address. Through the Free Enterprise Education Institute, Milloy publishes CSRWatch.com, which attacks corporations for caving in to the demands of environmental groups. At CSRWatch.com, Milloy also advertises the Free Enterprise Action Fund, which "seeks to provide investors with a financial return while educating and persuading companies to focus on increasing shareholder value and profits rather than trying to appease outside activists." The fund's two largest investments are in General Electric and ExxonMobil, and the prospectus lists Milloy as the owner and controller.

Last April, the Free Enterprise Action Fund, which owns less than 1% of J. P. Morgan Chase & Co. (JPM), asked the company to perform an audit of "the costs and benefits to shareholders, employees and customers—particularly those in the developing world—of implementing the demands of the anti-business activist group Rainforest Action Network concerning lending policies for energy and land-use projects."

In a [press release](#), Milloy stated: "We'd like to see the Audit Committee complete this review before the new policy impacts JPM's shareholders, employees, and customers—especially those in the developing world who desperately need financing from the developed world to escape poverty."

In April 2005, Milloy rented a [booth](#) [link goes to a PDF of expired webpage] at the National Association of Broadcasters conference in Las Vegas, Nev., for Technosteria, Inc., whose mission is "to alert manufacturers and customers of dangers looming in mandates by the EU and others which prohibit lead and other substances in products." The address for Technosteria is Milloy's home in Potomac, and the phone number is the same as that listed for TASSC.

Junkman has the last laugh

So, how did AAAS choose Milloy as a judge? Pinholster says that Milloy was picked because he is listed in a Bacon's media directory of journalists and press officials as a "science editor." However, she claims that the judges did not consider his input after he revealed his connection to the Cato Institute. She calls the whole issue "an anomaly" and adds that AAAS is now instituting a policy that requires judges to sign a conflict-of-interest form. After our inquiries, a [quote](#) [link goes to a PDF of the original web page before it was changed] from Milloy praising the winner of the AAAS journalism contest in the award's announcement was [removed](#) from the AAAS website.

"They can't have made him a judge and then take it away from him," says Tom Rosensteil, the director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, adding that AAAS must not have done its homework.

Getting closely involved with a prestigious science society has been an enduring



[ambition](#) for Milloy. In 1997, he wrote that future goals for TASSC would be to “sponsor forums on sound science at the annual meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Chemical Society, and the Society for Risk Analysis.”

“What a coup for the tobacco companies and other big corporate interests,” says Glantz. —[PAUL D. THACKER](#)

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