

USU professor questions Trump administration's motives after term on EPA board not renewed

By Kevin Opsahl staff writer May 8, 2017



Courtney Flint

A Utah State University professor called the Environmental Protection Agency's decision not to renew her term on a scientific review board "a political decision" by the Donald Trump Administration.

Courtney Flint, USU associate professor of sociology, social work and anthropology, said she was surprised to see an email to her on May 5 from the EPA stating her term with Board of Scientific Counselors, or BSC, would not be renewed. She said she was told previously she would have another term.

"It's clear from the reports in the media that the current administration has said that they want to replace board positions held by academic scientists with members from industry, so I do not think I am speculating when I say that this is a political move," Flint wrote.

The EPA's Board of Scientific Counselors provides advice and recommendation to the agency's Office of Research and Development — the "scientific research arm" of the EPA, according to the agency's website.

The Herald Journal did not reach the EPA before deadline, but multiple news reports suggest half of the 18-member board did not have their terms renewed.

Meanwhile, CNN obtained an email from one of the members whose term was not renewed, which said the EPA would “carry out a competitive nomination process to solicit new members rather than reappointing individuals.”

The Herald Journal asked Flint for a copy of the email from the EPA and did not get a response on deadline.

On the Board of Scientific Counselor’s Executive Committee, Flint stated “we reviewed the EPA’s crosscutting research roadmaps on climate change, children’s environmental health, environmental justice, and nitrogen and co-pollutants.”

“In our review of these programs, the BOSC has been careful to avoid partisanship in our scientific recommendations,” Flint wrote. “I am hopeful that this advisory work can continue to be done by objective scientific experts to inform policy.”

Flint has been a professor at USU since 2013. She’s a self-described environmental social scientist, and her work focuses on how communities are affected by natural resource conditions and environmental disturbance.

One example of Flint’s work was an iUTAH study co-authored with other professors on Utah’s water future, which focused on perspectives from residents in different cities regarding their water issues. iUTAH stands for “innovative Urban Transitions and Aridregion Hydro-sustainability” and is a National Science Foundation-funded program.