

Beware mudslinging: How abuse of FOIA derails discussion of science and GMOs

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

In general, FOIA requests like those made of Dr. Kevin Folta, and anything else journalists can do to find out whether someone claiming the trustworthy mantle of scientist/expert has been corrupted by funders, are a good idea. But more and more, advocates on all sorts of issues are using them to cast doubt on the trustworthiness of what an opponent says.

Money can corrupt. But it is unfair, and not mature journalism, to simply say “He got money from some bad actor, and therefore you can’t trust *anything* he says.” Because money doesn’t always corrupt, mostly it finds those already saying what the funder likes. The views are sincerely held, and predate the cash.

There are plenty of examples of companies funding scientists and pundits to say whatever the company wants. And there are many examples on the “green” side of environmental issues too.

Dr. Paul Offit on childhood vaccines. Calestous Juma on GMOs. They are honest and their views are sincere. They just offer views, or facts, that the other side doesn’t like, or can’t dispute. So the other side throws mud at them, hoping to undermine the credibility of what they say.

Mudslinging is harmful and polarizing. It makes funders leery of supporting work that could move these heated issues forward. The mudslinging makes scientists leery to speak out, muzzling some of the voices we need to hear from, if we’re going to make informed choices. And it lures journalists toward an easy story angle that distracts them from reporting on the factual questions the public needs to understand to make fully informed decisions about the issue.

Read full, original post: [What’s More Dishonest: Scientists Taking Corporate Cash or Mudslingers Attacking Them?](#)