

# **We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together: Public Health Regulation and the Conservative Turn Against Federally Supported Science**

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Decades of research in science and technology studies elucidate how social processes shore up what communities consider to be valid scientific findings. In countless studies of debates over how “science” should be applied, especially in the area of regulatory policy, this scholarship explains how boundary work is used to recast policy decisions as the province of “neutral” experts. Moreover, this scholarship shows how efforts to use “science” to shore up political decisions creates opportunities to open the black box of science production. The resulting deconstruction of scientists’ claims often leads to an erosion in the standing of science. What this literature has not predicted is that the decline in social standing of science would play out in such a partisan way. This paper touches on important junctures in the historical institutionalization of science within the federal government in the federal government. From there, it explores partisan debates over how science should be funded and used and presents empirical evidence showing an enduring bipartisan agreement around the need to support science in order to inform public policy. Beginning in the mid-1990s, however, a new pattern is emerging where progressive and conservatives no longer settle their regulatory policy disagreements by calling for “more science.” While this new fault line may look like an incremental change in a persistent ideological debate about the regulatory power of the state, I argue it represents a dramatic departure from a longstanding historical partnership.