



## Protesters take to the streets in SF March for Science

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Photo: Paul Chinn, The Chronicle



IMAGE 1 OF 24

Tim Kingston (left) and Rebecca Hensler dress as dinosaurs for the March for Science on Market Street in San Francisco.

A heaving mass of humanity stretching from the Ferry Building to City Hall waved signs, chanted, sang and danced Saturday in a giant, celebratory March for Science, one of hundreds held around the globe to commemorate Earth Day. The roiling crowd, tens of thousands strong, blocked San Francisco's main thoroughfare for at least two hours as families, children, immigrants and lab-coat-wearing protesters enthusiastically demonstrated their enthusiasm for science.

"This is not partisan. Everybody is affected," said Marlene Mills, 69, of Larkspur, who was especially worried about potential cuts in climate research. "The administration better listen because science is so important, you have to take care of it."

The driving force behind the nationwide marches was the widely held perception that

President Trump has little regard for what science can bring or what it has done for the country.

Trump has proposed major cuts in the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Institutes of Health and a variety of other science-related federal organizations. He attempted to clarify his view in an Earth Day statement, saying “rigorous science depends not on ideology, but on a spirit of honest inquiry and robust debate.”

At 2:49 p.m. Pacific time, in the midst of the demonstration, Trump tweeted, “I am committed to keeping our air and water clean but always remember that economic growth enhances environmental protection. Jobs matter!”

The peaceful, upbeat crowd began gathering midmorning at San Francisco’s Justin Herman Plaza to listen to scientists speak before the 12:30 p.m. march to the Civic Center, where a science fair and a host of other activities and events were held.

“I am afraid of a post-truth world in which evidence doesn’t matter,” said Pamela Ronald, a plant geneticist who addressed a crowd that periodically erupted in chants of “Science, science, science!”

More than **500 marches were planned** across the country and in cities around the world. By 1 p.m., Market Street was a sea of handwritten signs, including “Reality Has a Science Bias,” “Science was not a liberal conspiracy,” “Geology rocks” and, in a nod to dentistry, “Fight Truth Decay.”

Traffic came to a standstill on streets crossing Market Street as marchers made their way to the Civic Center.

While motorists pulled their hair out, an element of joy infused the march.

Kathy Petricca, a 75-year-old Martinez resident, was among a group holding a large banner that read, “Animals Against Extinction.”

“There are people who are new to this kind of experience,” said Petricca, who was dressed in a yellow “Panamanian golden frog” outfit. “Everyone is a little more intellectual than the usual activist. It makes it a little more real.”

April Ellis, 45, of San Francisco was leading a group of people riding five motorized ponies, which she said brought a bit of whimsy to the event.

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“There’s very serious stuff going on, and it’s important to bring creativity and silliness into the proceedings so that people don’t get too depressed,” Ellis said. “This march is a great way to do it. I’m pro-science, and I think the whole Bay Area is pro-science. That’s why I feel comfortable living here.”

Fay Murphy, 55, wore a red, white and blue space suit as she marched with families,

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including children and grandparents, past marching bands and folk-singing groups. There were spontaneous eruptions of cheering and enthusiastic chants of “Let’s go science.”

“I’m a big supporter of NASA and the space program, which needs more funding, not less,” said Murphy, who held a poster with drawings of all the planets but with Trump’s face depicting Uranus.

“We’re not going to roll over and let them defund science,” she said.

Many of the marchers lingered until late in the day at the science fair at Civic Center Plaza, where both the learned and the lamebrained shimmied to rock and funk bands, listening to lectures, drank kombucha or beer, and toured informational booths dedicated to everything from cockroaches and bedbugs to solar and nuclear energy.

Trump signed an executive order in March rolling back Obama-era regulations that required federal land managers to take climate change into consideration. He also signed an executive order in February **requiring the EPA** to review federal water regulations intended to protect 60 percent of the bodies of water in the United States from pollution, including wetlands and rivers.

The president tweeted Saturday, just before the San Francisco march began, that, “Today on Earth Day, we celebrate our beautiful forests, lakes and land. We stand committed to preserving the natural beauty of our nation.”

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### Online video

For footage of the March for Science, see this story at [www.sfchronicle.com](http://www.sfchronicle.com) or [www.sfgate.com](http://www.sfgate.com).



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