

Roth: A quote to remember this spring

By [Jim Roth](#), Director and Chair of the Firm's Clean Energy Practice Group. This column was [originally published in The Journal Record](#) on April 2, 2018.



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It is officially spring. At least here in the Northern Hemisphere. In Oklahoma we've lost an hour of sleep but some of us enjoy the earlier sunrise and later sunset the longer days offer.

We Oklahomans know that with spring come tornado season and our obsessive assessment of the weather. Lucky for us, we have the National Weather Center in Norman, with some of the foremost scientists in the field doing their best to evaluate our crazy weather and warn us when necessary. The center is a sub-organization of the National Weather Service, a branch of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The Climate Prediction Center, also a part of NWS, forecasts

future weather conditions relative to what is normal, as opposed to daily weather forecasts that aim to predict things like high and low temperatures and rainfall potential. Each year in March, the Climate Prediction Center releases its Spring Outlook report. This year, the report predicts moderate flooding, warmer-than normal temperatures, and persistent drought that will affect more than one-fourth of the country from California through Oklahoma and the Great Plains.

Another timely release for the erratic weather season was a new study that links warming Arctic temps to colder weather, again. The study was published in the peer-reviewed journal *Nature Communications*. Peer review is one indicator of reliable research. A peer-reviewed publication requires the author to offer strong evidence for the conclusions set forth. Other scientists in that field read the work and provide feedback as to whether they regard it as sufficiently high quality to publish. The process is somewhat analogous to a Daubert hearing for legal evidence. These methodologies are not perfect, but they provide an opportunity for scrutiny, and scrutiny can reveal the weakness in an idea, thus allowing it to be improved or rejected.

Increasingly, climate-related science is subject to intense scrutiny, at times more Draconian than Daubert. Despite this, scientists persevere, and this study reveals results similar to those that have preceded it in earlier studies. Generally, that climate change is not fake news; specifically, this study revealed a nexus between warming temperatures in the Arctic and an increase in severe winter weather in the eastern U.S., and did so more extensively than previous studies. While the scientists duke this out, one concept that has been continually proven is that greenhouse gases are warming the planet, and the Arctic is warming more quickly than other locations. Since science and our ability to understand the things around us is always improving, I pose, at the very least, that we remain open-minded to repeatedly demonstrated

research.

The author Robert Pirsig is quoted as saying something really provocative about dogma. "You are never dedicated to something you have complete confidence in. No one is fanatically shouting that the sun is going to rise tomorrow. They know it's going to rise tomorrow. When people are fanatically dedicated to political or religious faiths or any other kinds of dogmas or goals, it's always because their dogmas are in doubt."

In other words, loud people on the subject of climate change are probably less secure about their beliefs (and the evidence to support it) than those that more quietly rely on established, peer-tested science. So as the raucous Oklahoma spring season begins, especially as Easter coincides with the change between March and April, it might be a good time to read up on the Climate Prediction Center's recent study and then see for yourself what climate unfolds.

Oh, and one more favorite quote to remember: Science doesn't care if we believe it or not, it just is.

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