The election of President Donald J. Trump has awakened many politically disengaged people on both sides of the political spectrum. Whether you like the results or not, the 2016 presidential election inspired people to become more politically active and to learn about the policies discussed in the U.S. Congress. Countless people who once described themselves as apolitical are getting involved in politics at all levels, from school boards to the U.S. Congressional elections because they vehemently oppose the president’s policies. The same can be said about the activism and passion of people who enthusiastically support and like our new president.

Regardless of political affiliation, on Saturday, 22 April, thousands of scientists and science supporters marched in Washington, DC to let President Trump know that science matters, science should be a priority during his administration, and science should be fully funded. As a scientist who demands results from all branches of government, I ask the question: Should scientists or professionals with science backgrounds get involved in political advocacy or run for office? I believe the answer is yes, we should.

The 115th Congress has very few members with science and engineering backgrounds—close to 12% in the U.S. House of Representative and less than 10% in the U.S. Senate—and the numbers are even smaller when talking about members of Congress with advanced degrees in science and engineering fields. Most college degrees on both sides of Capitol Hill are law and business degrees. I truly believe government would work better if we elected capable individuals with diverse professional backgrounds. However, it should start with the desire of scientists to participate in the process, lessening the fear of losing credibility, and learning to transition from the scientific and professorial stage to the public policy stage.

Why Not Scientists?

Why not scientists? There are countless reasons for scientists to get involved in political advocacy or run for office.

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Reasons include concerns about the anti-science environment in Washington and opposition to science-based and evidence-based policy. In many cases, members of Congress or the Executive Office disregard sound scientific findings and attack the evidence and the science behind the results because it goes against their political or personal views.

Scientists are passionate, industrious, and trained to look for evidence. We process vast amount of data, focus on the projects at hand, and if we fail, we persevere and start over again. There are many more skills needed to be successful in politics, but when considering and developing policies on healthcare, medicine, agriculture, or other important areas where science is involved, scientific training could be a competitive advantage to a member of Congress.

Furthermore, who would defend science better than scientists when science is under attack in Washington, DC or in your neighborhood? Regardless of their political affiliation, scientists and engineers, should get engaged and put their name forward, so we can “make science great again.”