Climate Change

Summary and Key Points

Policy Proposals

1. Reject carbon taxes, including carbon tariffs, and do not regulate greenhouse gases.
2. Reject all efforts to create federal carbon accounting schemes, including those deemed voluntary.
3. Require Senate approval for U.S. entry into any international climate change agreement.

Quick Facts

1. According to the models used by global warming alarmists, the United States could eliminate all greenhouse gas emissions immediately and expect only 0.2°C of averted warming by 2100.
2. The models used to predict global warming have consistently exaggerated the warming that occurred. Actual warming has been on average 43 percent less than predicted in the models.
3. In 2007, former Vice President Al Gore won an Academy Award and a Nobel Prize for his film *An Inconvenient Truth*. The film predicted that all snow would melt from Mount Kilimanjaro by 2016, predicted a 20-foot rise in the oceans "in the near future," and showed simulations of New York City deluged. Twenty years later, Mount Kilimanjaro is still snow-capped, and Manhattan is still above water. Sea levels have been rising since the end of the Ice Age 10,000 years ago, and at current rates, will take more than 2,000 years to rise another 20 feet.
4. Climate change has been a permanent feature of this planet's natural history, and long predates the advent of widespread, anthropogenic (human-caused) emissions of greenhouse gases. As a simple example, the Ice Age that ended 10,000 years ago had no anthropogenic causes, and the historic record conclusively demonstrates ongoing climate fluctuations well before human activities emitted greenhouse gases in significant amounts. The extent of the human contribution to these pre-existing patterns is a matter of continuing scientific inquiry and has not been established with any level of precision.
5. Low-income families are hardest hit by climate-change policies. Americans with after-tax incomes of less than $30,000 spend 23 percent of their budgets on energy, compared to just 7 percent for those earning more than $50,000.
6. Coal, oil, and natural gas comprised 82 percent of global energy needs in 2023.

What to Say About Climate Change

- Americans want clean air and water without policies that make daily life more expensive.

- Government climate rules often raise energy costs while delivering little measurable environmental benefit. Innovation and adaptation solve problems better than sweeping government commands.
- Treating carbon dioxide as a harmful pollutant has driven costly regulations without delivering any environmental benefit.
- Climate models have repeatedly overstated warming effects and should not be treated as accurate predictors of future climate trends.
- Policies should focus on real environmental risks, not symbolic targets set by international agreements. One-size-fits-all climate mandates ignore regional differences and real-world tradeoffs.
- When climate policy ignores costs and evidence, all Americans pay more without seeing meaningful progress toward a cleaner environment.

The Issue

Climate change is a long-standing, natural process, and is neither a planetary emergency nor justification for any massive, costly government programs to curtail or transform energy use. Many factors contribute to climate change, most of which are naturally occurring, and the extent of human influence remains unclear. The sources cited for the most alarming climate claims are typically outdated, misunderstood, or products of political activism.

Mainstream climate science does not comport with climate change alarmism or catastrophe. The U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC's) most recent report[1] estimates that warming since 1850 amounts to 1.1°C. It found increasing trends in heat waves, heavy precipitation, and some kinds of drought, and it found downward or no trends for hurricanes, winter storms, and extreme cold, floods, tornadoes, or thunderstorms. The most extreme projections for warming—those deemed "most likely" in the IPCC's 2014 Fifth Assessment Report—were downgraded to "low likelihood."

Objective and transparent science should be an important tool in the formation of public policy. This is especially important because significant areas of disagreement remain in the scientific community about the nature and pace of warming. Independent efforts to determine the severity of climate change more accurately would help policymakers to take any necessary cost-effective, verifiable, and effective actions.

No matter how urgent the need to combat climate change, proposed federal policies like cap and trade, carbon taxes, or regulations on vehicles and power plants would be ineffective tools. Even if the United States eliminated all its greenhouse gas emissions, there would be no significant effect on warming overall. Even if the alarmist projections were correct, because the United States represents only a small and shrinking share of global greenhouse gas emissions, the entire world would have to change how it consumes energy to have any significant effect on global temperatures. It is pure fantasy to expect that developing countries—technically still including China—would be willing to forgo inexpensive and abundant carbon dioxide (CO_2)–emitting energy in favor of more expensive, intermittent sources to provide energy for energy-poor families and their growing economies.

The costs of such aggressive policies are significant and would leave Americans with fewer resources to combat current and future environmental challenges, whether climate-related or otherwise. The direct effect of higher energy costs is just a small part of the story. Energy is a necessary input for nearly all goods and services. Consequently, Americans would pay more for food, health care, education, clothes, and every other good or service that requires energy to make and transport. The fact is that human well-being has skyrocketed in terms of wealth and health since the Industrial Revolution, which was fueled by hydrocarbons.

Far too often, so-called climate solutions seek to re-engineer America's system of limited, representative government and free enterprise. For instance, the Biden Administration's regulations on power plants and vehicles threatened to impose monumental changes on America's electricity, transportation, manufacturing, and agricultural sectors for the purpose of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. If revived, these proposals would fundamentally change how people produce and consume energy, harvest crops, raise livestock, build homes, drive cars, and manufacture goods. Washington would make decisions on behalf of consumers and producers, and every American would bear the costs, with the poor suffering the most. Moreover, these costly policies would be futile, having no discernible effect on the climate, even while stripping freedom and prosperity from the American people. The President's deregulatory agenda marks a strong effort to reverse the damage of the previous Administration, and Congress should ensure that any legislation reinforces this deregulatory agenda and works to make this deregulatory progress permanent.

Recommendations

To preserve affordable and reliable energy for Americans, the U.S. government should:

Reject the regulation of greenhouse gases. The Biden Administration imposed a suite of greenhouse gas emissions regulations and executive orders that unnecessarily drove up energy prices and eliminated consumer choice, while having no meaningful climate impact. The draconian regulations that the Biden Administration enacted to suppress vehicle tailpipe and power plant emissions would have effectively banned internal combustion vehicles and wipe out America's current energy-producing infrastructure. The Trump Administration's moves to rescind these regulations should be legislatively reinforced, to prevent future backsliding. With less than three years left in the current Administration, lasting leadership and change must come from Congress. Congress should prohibit the federal government from regulating greenhouse gas emissions and clarify that the Clean Air Act was never intended to regulate greenhouse gases, such as CO2.

Make targeted spending decisions to build resilient infrastructure. Whether carbon-dioxide levels rise, fall, or stay the same, the United States and the rest of the world will experience extreme weather events. Climate and land will continue to change for a wide variety of reasons. Without question, extreme weather and long-term climate change can adversely affect communities and infrastructure. The federal government (when applicable), state and local governments, and the private sector should address weather-related infrastructure vulnerabilities through site-specific and situation-specific analysis and spending. Federal, state, and local policymakers should use the best available science to prepare more effectively—*before* storms inflict damage—to maximize resilience and preparedness.

Prohibit the use of "social cost of carbon" in government cost-benefit analyses. Federal agencies perform cost-benefit analyses for a wide range of regulatory and permitting decisions. Under the Obama Administration, agencies began to incorporate a "social cost of carbon" in these analyses to assess the alleged social costs of an activity emitting CO2. The statistical models upon which the federal government relied offer significantly different results when using a variety of justifiable inputs; as a consequence, values are essentially arbitrary and are not credible tools for policymaking. Although President Donald Trump has ended the use of "social cost of carbon" by federal agencies, this action was done by executive order, which a future President could reverse with his own executive order. Congress should prevent any agency from using regulatory analysis metrics with the "social cost of carbon" and the "social cost" of other greenhouse gas emissions in any cost-benefit analysis or environmental review. These deceptively precise, yet utterly meaningless, numbers undermine the entire point of submitting regulations to a rigorous economic review.

Withdraw from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The most effective way to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement is to withdraw from the entire UNFCCC, the treaty that establishes the framework underlying the Paris agreement. The Paris agreement specifies that any

government withdrawing from the UNFCCC "shall be considered as also having withdrawn from this Agreement." The process for withdrawing from the UNFCCC requires one year, which simultaneously accomplishes withdrawal from the Paris agreement. Moreover, departure from the UNFCCC would impede future Administrations from using that framework to avoid obtaining the Senate's advice and consent in the treaty process. President Barack Obama signed the Paris Agreement but never obtained Senate ratification. President Trump withdrew from the Paris climate agreement during his first term, only to have President Joe Biden rejoin shortly afterward. Thus, the more permanent approach of withdrawing from the underlying UNFCCC is necessary in order to ensure that U.S. interests are prioritized over global climate goals. The President has already notified his intention to withdraw from the UNFCCC, and Congress should fully support this course of action until withdrawal officially occurs.

Reject carbon taxes and carbon tariffs. Carbon-based resources account for 80 percent of the energy resources used by Americans. A carbon tax is a tax on energy and, in effect, on the entire economy. Levying a price on CO2 would directly raise the cost of food, electricity, transportation, manufacturing, and nearly every good and service that Americans need and consequently would be regressive, hurting low-income Americans—who spend a larger share of their incomes on energy—the most. Similarly, a carbon tariff would impose a carbon tax on imported goods, which would increase prices throughout the economy. Even if Congress implemented a plan to return the revenue to the people and avoid carving out revenue for special interests, Americans would still face higher costs overall and would therefore lose much more than they would gain. Like every other regulatory or subsidy scheme to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions, a carbon tax is by no means a free-market solution, and would distort the market, fuel inflation, and would have no meaningful impact on global temperatures.

Facts + Figures

FACT: Big-government policies to slow down global warming would have no meaningful impact on climate.

- According to the Model for the Assessment of Greenhouse-Gas Induced Climate Change, the United States could eliminate all greenhouse gas emissions immediately and expect only 0.2°C of averted warming by 2100. If the entire industrialized world eliminated *all* carbon-dioxide emissions, only 0.5°C of warming would be averted by the end of the century.

- CO2–emitting natural resources like coal, oil, and natural gas meet 82 percent of the world's energy needs. Coal remains a dominant source of energy globally. Since 2000, global coal-fired power capacity has doubled, and roughly 6,700 coal plants are in operation around the world providing heat and electricity. Even as many Western countries phase out coal production and use, new coal plants are being built in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, where access to electricity is desperately needed.

FACT: Climate policies would be costly and would disproportionately harm lower-income families, farmers, and small businesses.

- Using a derivative of the U.S. Energy Information Administration's National Energy Model, Heritage analysts determined that reducing CO2 levels by 50 percent to 52 percent below 2005 levels by 2030 would result in:

  - An average employment shortfall of more than 1.2 million jobs with a peak shortfall of more than 7.8 million jobs. The cost to the overall economy would be $7.7 trillion through 2030, and the loss of income for a family of four would be more than $87,000.
  - Low-income families would be hit the hardest. Americans with after-tax incomes of less than $30,000 spend 23 percent of their budgets on energy, while those who earn more than $50,000 spend just 7 percent of their budgets on energy, according to the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity.

FACT: "The science is settled" and "97 percent of climatologists agree" talking points are wrong.

- The 97 percent figure comes from a 2013 *Environmental Research Letters* study by John Cook and eight colleagues[2] that examines the abstracts of nearly 12,000 academic papers on climate change and global warming between 1991 and 2011. Of those papers, 66.4 percent expressed no opinion on anthropogenic (human-caused) warming, 32.6 percent "endorsed" anthropogenic warming, 0.7 percent rejected anthropogenic warming, and 0.3 percent were unsure of the cause. The oft-cited statistic, that 97.1 percent endorsed the consensus position that humans are causing global warming[3] only applies to the 33.3 percent who ventured any position on human causation. These numbers say nothing about the urgency or danger of climate change.

- David Legates, former director of the University of Delaware's Center for Climatic Research, and three other researchers analyzed the same set of papers analyzed in the Cook study.[4] They found that a mere 0.3 percent of all papers—1 percent of the 4,014 papers expressing an opinion on the matter—claim that the majority of warming since 1950 is man-made.

- There are major areas of uncertainty in climate science. They include the accuracy of climate models (exaggerating warming), how a doubling of CO2 emissions influences global temperatures, and which trajectory of greenhouse gas concentrations most accurately reflects the future. There is no consensus on imminent climate catastrophe.

FACT: There are pronounced regional differences and increased variability in rainfall, but other areas are stable. Although the IPCC claims increased climate change–related precipitation, the data do not show any systematic pattern of increasing worldwide rainfall.

- Evidence for systematic trends in precipitation is weak and inconclusive. In fact, the variability in rainfall does not support a single reason or association of rainfall changes, such as increased anthropogenic CO2 emissions.

- Twentieth-century annual total rainfall was drier than late 19th-century rainfall, especially in the European region. Long-term rainfall data show little evidence of a behavior trend because the data show fluctuations on all time scales. Given their monotonic nature and natural variation, rainfall trends show weak evidence of being attributed to global warming.

FACT: Evidence of sea levels rising is highly limited and insufficient.

- Holding all other factors constant, including concentrations of atmospheric CO2, global sea levels would continue to rise, just as they have for the past 7,000 years.

FACT: Climate models vastly overstate warming.

- The observed summer temperature trend from 1973 to 2022 in the 12-state U.S. Corn Belt is considerably less than that produced by all 36 climate models used to promote changes in U.S. energy policy.

- Generalized warming of the global climate over the past half-century has averaged approximately 43 percent less than most climate models' predictions.

FACT: The IPCC has made premature conclusions on the science behind climate change.

- Urban heat islands, data distribution inconsistencies, and the underrepresentation of certain regions compromise the accuracy of global temperature measurements.

- Natural factors, including solar activity, may play a more significant role in temperature changes than the IPCC acknowledges.

- The Nile River provides the longest continuous hydrological record of about 849 years, much longer than current record of around 100 years to 150 years and reveals that climatic values of minimum water depth change substantially over time. In some centuries, the figures more than doubled, revealing that periods of "stable climate" may just be a small snapshot of natural variability.[5]

FACT: Crop yields have increased steadily since 1960 because of the development of drought-tolerant varieties, better irrigation, and the fertilizing effects of CO2.

- In the southeastern United States, an increased average temperature of 1 °C between 1980 and 2020 significantly improved corn and rice yields and had no effect on wheat.
- Beer hops have been increasing in crop yields steadily since 2012 despite increasing global CO2 levels.
- Higher atmospheric concentration of CO2 makes plants grow faster and boosts their efficient use of available water.

FACT: The frequency and intensity of hurricanes have not risen meaningfully, despite CO2 emissions and temperature increases in the 20th century globally.

- There has been little to no trend in hurricane activity since the mid-1800s, further underscoring the lack of a meaningful rise in total frequency and intensity of hurricanes.

FACT: Tornadoes, one of the most destructive weather phenomena, have decreased significantly since the 1950s.

- There has been a 50 percent reduction in strong tornadoes in the United States since the 1950s, despite rising carbon emissions and a moderate increase in temperature.[6]
- Large year-to-year variations in tornado activity can be explained by natural climate oscillations, not rising temperatures.

FACT: Claims that climate change, ozone, and asthma are connected are not supported by science.

- From 1990 to 2015, CO2 increased by 5.6 percent and methane decreased by 16 percent.
- From 1980 to 2013, oxides of nitrogen and volatile organic compounds decreased by 52 percent and 43 percent, respectively.
- From 1980 to 2022, mean ground level ozone concentrations have steadily decreased by 7 parts per billion per decade.
- The total number of days where ozone was "Unhealthy for Sensitive Subgroups" has decreased by 600 days per decade from 2000 to 2022.

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