

# OPINION

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## Finding common ground on climate change

As the election year of 2020 unfolds, there is plenty of rancor and polarization in the political world.

One issue that can potentially achieve bipartisan support is addressing a serious and time-urgent problem facing our world and our country — climate change.

The facts about climate change are irrefutable: oceans are warming, rising, and becoming more acidic; glaciers are disappearing at accelerating and alarming rates; world-wide temperatures are setting records every year; and extreme weather is striking in several places in the form of droughts (leading to fires like those in Australia), more severe hurricanes, and massive rainfall events.

Fully 97% of peer-reviewed scientists agree that human-caused climate change is at the heart of these events.

The American public, as evidenced by national surveys done by Yale University and others, seem to be behind legislative, bipartisan efforts to address climate change.

When asked about a carbon tax on producers of fossil fuels, 66% of all voters support such an initiative, 80% of Democrats, 53% of Republicans, 64% of swing voters, and 75% of Republicans under 40.

In the current political

### Viewpoint

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era Democrats have more strongly supported legislation to address climate change. But in the past Republicans have been leaders in environmental stewardship, such as Teddy Roosevelt in establishing our national park system and Republican congressmen in the Nixon era in developing the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act. Frank Luntz, a Republican strategist and pollster, had a stern warning for Republicans in reporting the results of his 2019 survey; Republicans under 40 support a carbon tax at the level of 7:1; 85% of Republican millennials agree that the current Republican position on climate change is hurting the party with younger voters.

The Citizens Climate Lobby, a bipartisan national and international movement, is supporting legislation called the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act in the House of Representatives, HR 763.

This bill, if enacted, will reduce carbon emissions by 40% in 12 years and promote economic and job growth at the same time.

It will do so by putting dollars, which are generated by a fee (not a tax to go to the government) on fossil-fuel producers, directly into the hands of the American public.

Climate change need not necessarily be a wedge issue politically but a bridge issue to unite the two major parties.

One issue that has led to bipartisan support is reducing carbon emissions through energy efficiency.

The International Energy Agency (2019) has reported that the most cost-effective way of enhancing any energy system is energy efficiency — it is the “single most important element that can bring the world to sustainable levels.”

The cheapest source of energy is that which you do not use.

Ohio Senator Rob Portman, a Republican, teamed up with Senator Shaheen, Democrat of New Hampshire, to introduce legislation called the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness bill; this bill addresses three areas to achieve greater efficiency: buildings (through strengthening of codes), manufacturing (through research and development on energy-efficient technologies), and the federal government (through improved computers and standards for new federal

buildings).

There are two companion bills to Portman-Shaheen in the House, each sponsored by a Republican and a Democrat, one by Representative David McKinley (R-WV).

The issue of jobs and the economy can also involve bipartisan support.

Jobs in the renewable energy sector are outpacing job growth in the economy as a whole.

There are 360,000 jobs in the solar industry (more than in coal and nuclear combined), and another 120,000 in wind; job growth in the latter tripled from 2008 to 2016.

We in Appalachia have seen little of this job growth in renewable energy, but it is possible that we can.

In this region of eastern Ohio, northwestern West Virginia, and western Pennsylvania, the natural gas business (extraction from the Utica Shale deposits) is extremely important to the economy and shows promise for future growth — at least in the near future until renewable energy resources are strengthened.

An effort in this region has been launched to promote industrial growth based on the cheap and abundant shale gas; the entity behind this effort is called the Shale Crescent USA.

Natural gas producers are

doing many things to reduce carbon emissions in drilling, transport, and storage of gas and in replacing high carbon-emitting coal-fired power plants.

Why can't we direct some of this promotion of natural-gas industrial development to the manufacture of wind turbines (made of fiberglass) and solar panels?

In the past this region has been a major manufacturing hub for glass products. This collaboration of natural gas development and manufacture of products for renewable energy can be a pro-growth and pro-environmental partnership between natural gas and renewables — a source of common ground at least for a while — until infrastructure around renewable energy is more fully developed.

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