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A Green Opportunity: Why American Conservatives Will Benefit By Fighting
Climate Change

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Abstract

For much of the twenty-first century, there has been a debate in America over the existence of anthropogenic climate change. This debate is unnecessary and polarizing, as liberals often advocate for climate-change-mitigation policy while conservatives often declare anthropogenic climate change false or unimportant. Along with this, debate over climate change largely prevents effective policy from being passed in the US, which is a problem because as one of the most populous, polluting and powerful countries, we have a significant impact on how the fight to mitigate climate change proceeds.

The goal of this thesis is to work towards ending that debate by arguing that it would be best for conservatives to join or even lead the fight against climate change in the United States. I will do so by providing reasons why doing so would be in conservatives' best interests, including the fact that severe weather and drought will harm the American economy, and that climate change will force more immigrants, legal and illegal, into the United States. After this, I will provide viable economic and political solutions to the problem that conservatives are likely to approve of. These include carbon taxes, shifting subsidies, technology transfer and cap-and-trade systems. Personal research in this thesis includes a survey taken by Republicans at Fordham University detailing their beliefs on the matter, in order to gauge whether they would be receptive to the solutions proposed. Along with this, I go into detail about certain conservative organizations and leaders who have already taken up this fight. This thesis proposes why it would benefit conservatives to take action against climate change and what policies, projects and actions should be taken in this fight.

Keywords: Conservative, Climate Change, Economic Solutions, Climate Change Skepticism, Global Warming.

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Introduction - Aim, Audience and Conservative Views on Climate Change

In general, Republicans and conservatives as a whole tend to dismiss the threat of climate change and ignore calls to fight against it. The goal of this argumentative piece is to convince the majority of conservatives that the fight against climate change is both essential for and beneficial to them. However, before we begin this discussion, we must first pinpoint the group that we are trying to convince. Individuals may not support action against climate change for many reasons, and many values and ideologies stand behind those reasons. Individuals who oppose or are indifferent to action against climate change may hold one or more of the following positions:

- Complete denial that climate change exists.
- Belief that climate change exists, but has existed for millions of years, and that we are powerless to influence it.
- Belief that climate change is anthropogenic (human-caused), but that it does not harm humans or the environment.
- An understanding that anthropogenic climate change is harmful while claiming that we cannot know how much change we actually cause.
- An understanding that anthropogenic climate change is harmful while claiming that no viable solutions have been proposed.
- An understanding that anthropogenic climate change is harmful, but hesitance to support solutions based on the fear that a solution will hurt people in other areas (economy, comfort, etc.).
- A blind belief that technological innovation will inevitably solve the problem on its own.
- Knowledge that climate change is a problem while believing that we should prioritize other economic, political and social problems over climate change.

This thesis argument does not intend to provide scientific evidence of harmful anthropogenic climate change as many scientific studies and academic articles already do so, including basic ecology textbooks. Therefore, I am not attempting to reach those who doubt the fact that humans cause climate change, and that it is harmful. There will likely be information about this topic in the paper, but it will not be the focus. I will, however, focus on the other category of people who resist action against climate change. My goal is to convince conservatives that they should

prioritize the fight against climate change for reasons that are largely specific to them, and that there are viable solutions that do not tank the economy and would align with conservative principles. I will also note that while much of what is written can be applied to the entire world, this thesis will focus on the American conservative and solutions that America can tackle.

The greater goal of this paper, in convincing conservatives to fight against climate change, is to change the collective opinion of the Republican base on the issue. This can be done in a variety of ways. A conservative or Republican reading this paper may see information they have not been exposed to. Along with this, supporters of the fight against climate change who read this might gain new ideas that they can pass on to conservatives. This can be done through conversation, debate or using ideas from this thesis in their own works. Doing this will hopefully result in a more climate change accepting Republican base. The only way that politicians will reverse their positions on climate change is if their constituents change their minds and demand climate policy. Even if the majority of conservative politicians fail to change in this regard, a more environmentally-friendly mindset among members of the republican party will allow for new governmental office-seekers seeking to fight climate change to succeed in republican elections.

No political party is completely homogeneous. Parties consist of people working together to get certain individuals elected to public office and gain governmental power. While it is usually the case that people belonging to the same political party share similar views, one does not need to hold specific views to be a member of a party. For an example, two Democrats may disagree on the extent to which healthcare should be socialized. A party is not an ideology, which is why different ideologies arise from the same party. The topic of contending ideologies

that is focused on in this thesis is climate change, specifically, the views of climate change among the Republican party.

Climate change is such a divisive issue among Republicans because party members often have to choose to believe either their politicians or climate scientists on this issue. Republicans are often reluctant to choose to abandon the views of their representative for the inconvenient and opposing views of the scientists and Democratic politicians who believe in climate change, but the topic has created a rift between the many who believe in the threat of climate change, and those who do not. Those who believe in this threat are often young Republicans and those who have studied science, demonstrating that it is no small portion of the party that is straying from the typical Republican view of climate scepticism. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, double the amount of Millennial Republicans compared to Baby Boomers believe in anthropogenic climate change, with 36% of Millennials believing compared to 18% of Boomers. Along with this, 47% of Millennial Republicans agree that the US government is not doing enough to reduce effects of climate change, as opposed to 27% of Boomers¹.

That being said, those who believe in climate change are not necessarily always in favor of tactics to fight the problem. This is true for quite a few reasons, some being the beliefs that: climate change exists, but it is not a problem; climate change exists but we have bigger problems to deal with; climate change exists, but any major solution would harm the economy or other aspects of the nation, and many others. These multitude of beliefs again divides the Republican party, but this time into slightly smaller and more individualized ideological groups.

Former Secretary of Treasury Henry Paulson puts it best when saying, “When you run a company, you want to hand it off in better shape than you found it. In the same way, just as we

¹ “Religious Landscape Study - Conservatives.” Pew Research Center

shouldn't leave our children or grandchildren with mountains of national debt and unsustainable entitlement programs, we shouldn't leave them with the economic and environmental costs of climate change... Risk management is a conservative principle, as is preserving our natural environment for future generations." If we want to keep America as it once was and have our descendants share the same type of success we shared, it is crucial to fight against climate change.

As I stated before, my goal is not to provide a scientific argument for the existence of anthropogenic climate change, but to provide an argument using political, social and economic evidence as to why Republicans should act on this issue. Specifically, my argument is geared toward those who believe in anthropogenic climate change, but are reluctant to act against it.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The purpose of this section is to gather essential information on the themes present in this thesis and compile it together so the reader can gain a background on the threats of global warming, potential solutions to it, and the reactions of conservatives to the phenomenon. I have gathered numerous studies and analyses done by political scientists on why the majority of conservatives do not act on climate change, along with what forms of communication produce the most results when engaging in dialogue with somebody who denies anthropogenic warming. This literature review also includes market-based proposals by economists detailing how to fight climate change. Finally, I include evidence of how climate change already is disrupting American life.

Research has been done showing the effectiveness of different talking points on their ability to improve climate change acceptance among conservatives. Graham Dixon, Jay

Hmielowski and Yanni Ma conducted a study in which they asked participants a series of questions about whether they believe the climate is changing anthropogenically, and whether that causes problems². Before the set of questions, each participant was read one of three testimonials, or no testimonial. The first testimonial was consensus based (mentioning the fact that 97% of climate scientists accept anthropogenic climate change), the second one was religion based (mentioning that God wants us to be stewards to the planet) and the third one was free-market based (mentioning that deregulating the energy market and allowing room for renewables has a beneficial effect on the economy). Respondents' acceptance of climate change was a mean of their answers to the questions, which were on a 1-7 scale ranging from least accepting to most accepting.

The survey demonstrated that providing conservatives with a consensus testimonial actually made them a little bit less accepting of climate change. Those who considered themselves very conservative, moderately conservative and slightly conservative and were exposed to this testimonial ended up scoring between .04 and .01 points lower than the control group who were not read a testimonial. While the damage this did was negligible, it provides evidence that appealing to conservatives with a science-based approach does not often work and is not the most productive way to engage in talk about climate change. The free market testimonial, however, generated a significant uptick in climate change accepting conservatives. When read a free market testimonial, conservatives scored between .44 and .18 points higher in climate change acceptance³. On a scale of 1-7 this is a significant increase.

² Dixon, Graham, Jay Hmielowski, and Yanni Ma. "Improving Climate Change Acceptance Among U.S. Conservatives Through Value-Based Message Targeting." *Science Communication* 39, no. 4 (2017): 520-534. Onesearch Advanced

³ *Ibid.*, 528

Dixon, Hmielowski and Ma's research demonstrates that it is possible to increase acceptance of climate change in conservatives, but certain approaches work better than others do. For this reason, I will be including economic solutions to climate change in this thesis, along with reasons why working to end climate change is beneficial to the economy and even cost-effective. The economy is a sign of American prosperity, and conservatives understandably do not want to make policy that will negatively affect it. However, the above research shows that verbally establishing the beneficial economic effects of climate change policy when talking to conservatives increases their acceptance of the phenomenon.

With 85% of conservatives being Christian⁴, one would think that using faith-based reasons to justify action against climate change would be effective on conservative Americans. However, a study done by researchers Li, Hilgard, Scheufele, Winneg and Jamieson shows the opposite. The study was done on Catholic Americans, both liberal and conservative, some who have read Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical on the need for action on climate change, *Laudato Si*, and some who have not. According to the researchers, "People who were aware of the encyclical had more polarized attitudes toward climate change than those who were unaware of it⁵". Although liberal Catholics who were aware of the encyclical had heightened concern about it, conservative Catholics demonstrated lower levels of concern. When forced to choose between the Pope's words and the general views of their ideology, they devalued the pope's words and stuck to the typical beliefs of conservatives. This sort of thinking demonstrates that most conservatives in America put their political beliefs ahead of their religious beliefs, at least in that situation, and appealing to religion is unlikely to increase climate change acceptance among

⁴ "Religious Landscape Study - Conservatives." Pew Research Center

⁵ Li, Nan, Joseph Hilgard, A. Dietram A. Scheufele, Kenneth M. Winneg, Kathleen Hall Jamieson. "Cross Pressuring Conservative Catholics? Effects Of Pope Francis's Encyclical On The U.S. Public Opinion Of Climate Change." *Climatic Change* 139, no. 3-4 (October 2016): 367-380.

conservatives. According to researchers, cultural cognition theory helps explain this response. The theory “posits that individuals selectively credit or dismiss risk-related information according to their in-group’s cultural values⁶”. Basically, when liberals hear about the Pope’s support of environmental justice, they become more likely to seriously consider the effects of climate change. On the other hand, conservatives are likely to become more skeptical of climate change. Francis’s message conflicts with their preexisting beliefs and values, and the human desire to avoid dissonance makes them align more strongly with their in-group. Conservatives were able to do this by devaluing the Pope’s credibility. While Catholic conservatives did consider Pope Francis more credible than their non-Catholic counterparts did, prominent conservative Catholics like Jeb Bush and Rick Santorum spoke out against the Pope’s message. Bush stated that “I don’t get economic policy from my pope,” and Santorum noted “I think we’re better off leaving science to the scientists⁷”. Pope Francis worked as a chemist prior to his ordination.

I included this information in my thesis because it is important to know what does and does not work when attempting to convince conservatives to accept climate change. While every person is different and will be receptive to different types of information, in order to spread climate change acceptance, we must know how to reach the greatest amount of people. It is clear from the last two studies that the best way to do this is not to appeal to religion, despite it being an important factor in most conservatives’ lives. Instead, we should address the economic benefits of fighting climate change, as it aligns with the value of stimulating economic growth, a principle that most conservatives (and Americans as a whole) hold dear.

⁶ Ibid., 370

⁷ Ibid., 374

One of these conservatives is Ted Halstead, the subject of Michael Greshko's 2017 article, "US Conservatives Unveil Plan to Fight Climate Change," which details a plan to counteract climate change that conservatives may be on board with. Ted Halstead is the founder and CEO of the Climate Leadership Council, a group of conservatives, including former officials to Reagan and Bush, who believe that it is imperative to fight against climate change. This plan is in the form of a tax, specifically a \$40 tax per ton of carbon emissions. However, instead of the money going back to the government, the 200-300 billion a year this policy would generate goes straight to the citizens. It is estimated that each family would receive 2000 dollars a year from this tax⁸. This plan is likely to appeal to republicans because it provides an incentive to cut carbon emissions without adding regulations or giving money to the government. In fact, the greatest beneficiary of this policy (other than the environment) would be the American family. Conservatives would be even happier to hear that many conservative economic thinkers like Arthur Laffer, Eli Lehrer and Kevin Hassett are in favor of this tax, and that it could replace other taxes like capital gains, corporate and personal income taxes, at least partially⁹. Reducing taxes in other areas to make way for a tax that is very clearly beneficial to the country is likely a proposition that almost all conservatives would find worth considering.

Another prominent conservative voice in the fight against climate change is English philosopher and writer Sir Roger Scruton. In his book, "How to Think Seriously about the Environment," Scruton expresses his desire to fight climate change in an ecologically effective and economically feasible manner. He references the so-called "tragedy of the commons" as the

⁸ Greshko, Michael. "US Conservatives Unveil Plan To Fight Climate Change." *National Geographic*, February 11 2017.

<https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/02/conservatives-unveil-plan-to-fight-climate-change>

⁹ Lehrer, Eli. "Climate Change: It's Time For A Conservative Alternative." *Environmental Law Reporter's News and Analysis*. vol. 43 (September 2013) <http://2o9ub0417chl2lg6m43em6psi2i.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/43.10728-1.pdf>

reason why many environmental resources get depleted. In brief, the tragedy of the commons occurs when a group of people share a resource, for instance, fish. Nobody owns the fish, so people are entitled to take however much they want. Because of this, everybody takes as much as they can out of self interest, and the fish get depleted. Scruton states that companies work in self-interest with most environmental resources, which results in environmental degradation or overuse of resources¹⁰.

Over the years, economists have attempted to solve this tragedy, and have come up successful in many cases. Common pool resource management is the method in which common resources are divided in a fair manner, allowing people/households/businesses their share of said resources without overuse. Rules, rights, sanctions and punishments are all ways to manage these resources¹¹. The management of carbon emissions is an derivative of common pool resource management, the difference being that carbon dioxide is a by-product and not usually a sought-after resource. That being said, rules and regulations govern emissions in a very similar way to desirable resources.

Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) in Iceland and New Zealand have been successful in limiting exploitation of common pool resources. ITQ systems measure the total stock of a resource and designate an allowed stock, which is a certain amount smaller than the total. Each holder has a specific amount of shares of the total allowed stock. Although carbon dioxide use is not exactly a tragedy of the commons, ITQs could be used to limit carbon emissions¹². While most ITQs are used for fishing, they did originate in the 1960s, designed to limit pollution in

¹⁰ Scruton, Roger. *How To Think Seriously About The Planet*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 144

¹² *Ibid.*, 145

factories¹³. Cap-and-trade systems are very similar to ITQs. While they are not used to conserve a resource, they do set a limit to the total amount of carbon dioxide that can be produced, and firms can trade their shares, or “quotas” of amount they can produce for money or other commodities.

Chapter 2: Survey - Purpose, Questions and Results

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DRPBK9V>

Because Republicans and conservatives as a whole have vastly different views surrounding climate change, I wanted to see for myself what percentage of them accepted the science of anthropogenic climate change, and if so, were supportive of government policy to counteract it. To do this, I gathered firsthand data on the opinions of conservatives on the issue. Since it is technically possible that members of the Fordham College Republicans hold neutral or liberal political views, I allowed people on all sides of the political spectrum to answer the survey and asked about the respondents political lean in the first question.

Conducting this survey was essential to my research, as it gave proof that the entire republican party is not homogenous. If the majority of conservatives surveyed selected that they do not believe humans cause significant climate change, it would demonstrate that compelling them to take action would be much more difficult, as they would be skeptical about trying to control something out of our power. The fact that most conservatives surveyed answered that they do believe in anthropogenic climate change means that less time and energy needs to be spent explaining the physical science of the phenomenon, and more can be spent discussing potential solutions. In short, it is difficult to discuss solutions to a problem with somebody who does not believe the problem exists. This survey demonstrates that the majority of conservative

¹³ Grafton, Quentin and Rose Delvin. "Paying for pollution: permits and charges". *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*. vol 98, no. 2 (1996): pp:275-288. Jstor

responders do not fall under that category, and that my research and arguments might have meaning to them, along with many other conservatives. Although this takes a leap of judgement, one can consider this a sign of hope that many conservatives are willing to join the cause.

The survey was distributed in a variety of different ways, primarily through Facebook post and a notice to the Fordham College Republicans. I also spread news of the survey through word of mouth, text and email. Over the course of two months, I accumulated fifty-seven responses. I reviewed every response to make sure the questions were taken seriously, and only had to remove one respondent's answers, as they were meant to be comical. Of these 57 responses, 31 people categorized themselves as conservative, while another 6 picked neutral.

I wrote 9 questions for the survey, each with a specific purpose in categorizing people. The first question, which asks people to categorize their political views, gives the options of very, moderately and leaning conservative/liberal, along with neutral. This question is essential, because it allows me to see how people on the desired side of the spectrum see climate change. For my next question, I asked which three political issues the respondent considers the most important. This allows me to know whether environmental issues are on their radars, and if not, which ones take precedence. The next three questions, "Do you believe in the existence of climate change to any extent?", "Has Earth's average temperature been increasing in the past century?", and "To what extent has climate change in the last century been anthropogenic?" let me know whether the respondent understands the science behind climate change. If the respondent strongly denied anthropogenic climate change's existence, it lets me know that they would likely not be receptive to the arguments in this thesis. The next two questions, "Is global warming a threat to life on Earth, and to what extent?" and "Does global warming pose a threat to humans, and to what extent?" serve the purpose of telling whether the respondents believe

anthropogenic climate change is harmful. Reasons for this will be discussed in the thesis, however. The last two questions, “Should the US government do anything at all to slow down and eventually put a stop to global warming?” and “What should be done by the US government to address the threat of global warming?” provide information for the heart of my thesis. From this information, I am able to figure out what percentage of conservatives believe that the government should take an active role in the fight against climate change. The last question is a write-in, which allows me to understand which government policies some conservatives are already in favor of.

While 36% of conservative respondents stated that they were not in favor of the US government fighting climate change, many respondents still gave good answers as to what they believe the US should and should not be doing in this battle, allowing me to better understand conservative viewpoints. Obviously, no one response speaks for conservatives as a whole, but a collection of responses allows us to see numerous conservative outlooks to the problem of climate change. A respondent who categorized themselves as “moderately conservative” wrote that the US government should

“Provide funding for modernization of energy infrastructure to better interface with nuclear, hydroelectric, solar, geothermal, and wind. Regulating emissions from large sailing vessels (they are responsible for a large fraction of pollutants). Most importantly, work to fix the education system. The disregard for widely accepted scientific findings is idiotic in this country.”

This conservative is clearly in favor of a switch to renewable energy with fewer carbon dioxide emissions, a sentiment shared by many conservatives surveyed. Another moderate conservative showed support for alternative energy, noting that

“The United States government should fund projects and research for renewable energy sources to curb the widespread use of fossil fuels.”

While punishing the fossil fuel industry was not a popular idea among conservatives, many of them were in favor of incentivizing renewable energy, through the use of “tax write-offs [and] green energy initiatives for both consumers and industry.” Incentivizing green energy will be a practice looked into later in this thesis.

The survey I conducted was more-encompassing, but admittedly smaller in participants than other surveys and polls taken by many Americans. While my survey is likely useful for understanding the views of young republicans in 2018, other surveys done succeed in gathering more of the American people. For this reason, I will also consider those surveys in order to understand the general views on climate change of Democrats and Republicans around the country.

In a 2013 poll, “78% of Democrats compared with 53% of Republicans believe that climate change is occurring, and 72% of Democrats worry about climate change compared with only 38% of Republicans¹⁴”. These statistics can be viewed many ways, but I choose to take a hopeful perspective. While it is clear that more Democrats need to get on board with fighting climate change, this countrywide poll states that more than half of Republicans believe in its existence on a basic level. This makes for easier dialogue while advocating for fighting climate change. Another reassuring statistic states that Republicans are less sure of their opinions regarding climate change than Democrats. In fact, other than some staunch, Tea-Party conservatives who outright deny it, Republicans often feel conflicted as to what to believe regarding climate change. This is hopeful, because it suggests that engaging in constructive and respectful dialogue with Republicans has a legitimate chance of gaining their support in the fight against climate change.

¹⁴ Lacasse, Katherine. “The Importance Of Being Green: The Influence Of Green Behavior On Americans’ Political Attitudes Toward Climate Change. *Environment and Behavior* 47, no. 7 (2015):754-781. Onesearch Discovery

Chapter 3: Possible Conservative Reasons To Fight Climate Change

Right now, action to stop climate change has little place in the Republican agenda, which means that Republican politicians are less likely to support these projects and policies.

Republicans in government are wary of taking action to help the environment, often because it means increased regulation, government spending and an uncertain future in job markets like coal and oil¹⁵. Along with this, fossil fuel lobbyists often finance Republican campaigns, and this would likely stop if those running for office promoted renewable energy.

Because republican politicians are very unlikely to act against climate change, their constituents, who are mostly conservative, will feel the same way. If the leaders of the republican party, conservative news sources and other constituents are all reinforcing each other's opinions about the same issue, it is difficult for individual conservative to break out of that cycle and learn the facts about climate change.

When hearing and interpreting information pertaining to a political phenomenon, people are likely to think about their political identity and frame the issue from that perspective. For this reason, conservatives will likely be less receptive to information about the harms of climate change simply because they are "supposed to be." To counter this attitude, a person talking to conservatives must demonstrate how climate change harms them, or people in their communities. This is not to say that conservatives are especially selfish; It is simply a testament to the fact that people are more likely to be concerned with an issue when they have personal stake in it. For example, if I am trying to convince a conservative from Georgia that the US should take action against climate change, I would mention that higher temperatures and sea level rise mean more

¹⁵ Floam, Jacob. 21, February 2018.

droughts and salt in groundwater which in turn harms the agriculture industry in the south, hurting the economy¹⁶.

Republicans need to know why climate change harms them. They are not doing themselves any favors by perpetuating the cycle of conservative politicians, media and constituents denying the facts of climate change. Other than conservative media sources who prey on citizens to maintain viewership, conservatives are not benefitting from their unwillingness to fight climate change. To clarify, while the drawbacks of unmitigated climate change obviously include flooding of cities, severe weather and massive agriculture and biodiversity loss, the ones I will focus on are those associated with the republican political agenda. By ignoring the increasing threat of climate change, conservatives will likely see an increase of refugees entering the USA, miss opportunities to gain power in government and a worldwide belief that America is no longer “the good guys.”

Patriotism and national pride have always been characteristics of the American people. Many Americans take comfort in the beliefs that the USA is the best at the most important qualities that define a country. Americans like having the best sports teams, the largest military, the biggest cars, and according to many, the freest country. Putting it simply, not only do we want to be *good*, we want to be *the best*.

This logic can be applied to our approach to climate change. Dealing with climate change is patriotic, and it helps us preserve our country and way of life. We already view ourselves as the good guys. Why not take this logic one step further and become the country that saved the world? Every other major country has signed the Paris Climate Agreement. China and India have

¹⁶ “Climate Change Impacts In The Southeast.” *Environmental Protection Agency*. 19 January, 2017. https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/climate-impacts/climate-impacts-southeast_.html

agreed to sharply cut their CO2 emissions while we have taken very few strides in that regard¹⁷.

The fact is, that if America does not lead the charge against climate change, other countries, specifically our rival countries, will be better than us in one of the most important ways. America has always been the country where technological and industrial innovation has thrived. One reason America is great is the sheer number of Americans genius ideas and inventions that changed the world for the better. If we were to adopt solutions like an increase in nuclear energy and carbon sequestration techniques, we would once again be known as a beacon for innovation. Sharing this viewpoint with conservatives will possibly spark their sense of national pride and possibly rally them to join the fight against climate change.

Conservatives and liberals are often divided politically on what should be done about large-scale immigration, legal and illegal. A general conservative belief on illegal immigration is that a mass influx of illegal immigrants into the United States causes economic instability in the form of immigrants taking the jobs of unemployed citizens. Along with that, some conservatives think that illegal immigration makes the country less safe, and dilutes American culture. My opinions on this issue, while dissimilar, are not relevant. However, the fact is that climate change will likely cause a greater influx of immigrants into America, both legal and illegal.

Rising global temperatures and a decrease in rainfall is already starting to hit northern Mexico. Rural areas in this region are heavily reliant on agriculture, and rising temperatures and aridity are projected to increase likelihood for droughts in the region. Michael Oppenheimer, a Princeton University climate scientist, argues that climate variations cause people to migrate,

¹⁷ Gowen, Annie and Simon Denyer. "As U.S. Backs Away From Climate Pledges, India And China Step Up." *Washington Post*. 1 June, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/as-us-backs-away-from-climate-pledges-india-and-china-step-up/2017/06/01/59ccb494-16e4-4d47-a881-c5bd0922c3db_story.html?utm_term=.dd0a78f06e8a

stating that “we have a lot of evidence from many different countries that relatively modest variations in the climate, that could be short-term or long-term, do cause people to move¹⁸”.

The amount of climate migrants that would enter the US from Mexico is uncertain. A study co-authored by Oppenheimer estimates a possible 6.7 million people coming to the US from Mexico because of climate change by 2080. However, another study done by researchers at University of California Davis estimates only 41,000 new arrivals from Mexico in the next 50 years. Despite the wildly different numbers of those and other studies, they all agree that high temperatures and reduced rainfall have contributed in the past to waves of migration from Mexico to America¹⁹. Georgetown professor Susan Martin believes that climate migration from Mexico to the USA will be relatively small, due to the Mexican government giving its farmers greater insurance when faced with climate-based crop loss. However, other Central American countries are not so lucky. Farmers in these countries do not have similar insurance safety nets to fall back on, and extreme weather, including droughts will very likely force many immigrants to move to the States. In short, the new arrivals may not be from Mexico, but climate change will almost certainly increase immigration, legal and illegal, from Central America to the United States, a movement that many conservatives would like to stop.

A friendly discussion with an open-minded person always has the ability to influence said person’s views, even if that person holds an opposing viewpoint. Likewise, Democrats and Republicans engaging in dialogue about climate change can possibly sway the Republican into wanting to fight against the problem. However, it is not often that we engage in one-on-one dialogues with members of the other party, and even if we do, not all people share this

¹⁸ Roth, Sammy. 2017. “How climate change could drive immigration to the United States from Mexico.” USA Today. 28 December 2017. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/weather/2017/12/28/how-climate-change-could-drive-immigration-united-states-mexico/948358001/>

¹⁹ Roth. “How climate change could drive immigration to the United States from Mexico.”

opportunity. Because of this, in order for a large portion of conservatives to change their opinion on the issue, respected members of the party must step up and speak to their constituents about it.

Many republicans are already doing this, including Florida congressman Carlos Curbelo. Ever since his election to congress in 2014, Curbelo has been urging his fellow congressmen and women to take the threat of climate change seriously. He and democratic representative Ted Deutch joined together to form the Climate Solutions Caucus²⁰, which consists of 30 members, 15 from each party. Curbelo says that many republicans in office do understand and accept the science of climate change, but are afraid to speak out against it out of fear of electoral repercussions. This presents hope, because it demonstrates that if enough republican voters change their minds on this issue, the lawmakers would not be far behind. Republicans like Curbelo are essential in the fight against climate change, because they add another voice for voters to listen to, one that has different opinions than what they are used to. More voices like this will undoubtedly change the republican party.

Curbelo and other republicans are not simply figureheads for this movement, but rather actively fighting against the climate change disinformation act. In March of 2017, seventeen republicans in congress submitted a resolution “acknowledging that -human activities- have had an impact on the global climate and resolving to create and support -economically viable- mitigation efforts²¹”. Co-sponsored by Reps. Elise Stefanik and Ryan Costello, the resolution was obviously meant to appeal to republicans, remarking that the house members plan to use “our tradition of American ingenuity, innovation, and exceptionalism, to create and support economically viable and broadly supported private and public solutions to study and address the

²⁰ “Science Denial Is A Basic Tenet Of Today’s GOP. Carlos Curbelo Makes The Republican Case For Climate Solutions.” <https://grist.org/grist-50/profile/carlos-curbelo/>

²¹ Ibid

causes and effects of measured changes to our global and regional climates²²”. This quote by Curbelo is reflective of the many Republicans that sponsored the resolution and ties back to earlier points in this thesis, which state that the best way to reach republicans is to appeal to the American ideals of exceptionalism, pride, and innovation.

Along with his resolution, Curbelo has not been afraid to actively criticize members of Trump’s administration who doubt the existence of anthropogenic climate change, including EPA director Scott Pruitt, who falsely believes that carbon emissions have no link to climate change. Curbelo compared Pruitt’s opinions to that of flat earthers, and said that Pruitt’s assertions were “reckless and unacceptable.”

Chapter 4: The Changing Views Of Young Conservatives

If conservatives, especially politicians, need any more convincing that they should act on climate change, maintaining governmental power might be a good way to start. In general, the goal of the Republican party is to work together to ensure that Republican politicians hold political power. To do so, they need voters, and should look no further than the newest voting members of their base, young Republicans. Generational shifts have been responsible for many changes in political thought including opinions on race, sex and gay marriage. Unsurprisingly, the youngest voting generation also differs from the older ones in their opinions on anthropogenic climate change.

Putting it simply, if Republican politicians want to maintain power, they will need to start appealing to younger voters. Conservatives who want to stay relevant need to recognize that many young conservatives consider climate change an important issue, and may stray from those who ignore it or actively spread disinformation. In a Thomson Reuters survey of college

²² Ibid

republicans clubs around the country, about half of the clubs said that their members believed that climate change is human caused, while a quarter had mixed opinions on the issue. “A poll carried out by the Cornell University College Republicans club found that 74 percent of its members see climate change as an important issue for the United States to address²³”. Nick Frankowski, chairman of Ohio State’s College Republicans, said that “You’d be hard pressed to find someone who thought that climate change is not occurring at all.” It is important to note that these republicans are not simply quiet voters. Their membership in a college political group suggests that they are active members of the party who care very much about the leadership of the country. That means that they can cause major problems for climate change skeptics and deniers seeking reelection.

Chapter 5: An Interview With Fordham College Republican Treasurer Jacob Floam

On February 21st 2018, I had interviewed Jacob Floam, the Treasurer of both the Fordham and New York State College Republicans about the topic of conservatives and climate change, specifically about his views on solutions to the issue and the views of the Fordham College Republicans as a whole. Floam stated that while there is some debate among the group about the existence of anthropogenic climate change, most members believe it and do consider it an issue that needs to be addressed. It is important to note that Fordham is a Jesuit University in New York City, which may result in fewer far-right members and beliefs of the group, leading to an increased concern for climate change, but that cannot be proven at this moment.

²³ Capelouto, J. D. “In Generational Shift, College Republicans Poised to Reform Party on Climate Change.” Reuters. April 12, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-climatechange-politics-youth-feature/in-generational-shift-college-republicans-poised-to-reform-party-on-climate-change-idUSKBN17E2XF>

Floam continued on to explain how the Fordham CRs were working on this issue, stating that the group works with community-level groups to address environmental issues in the Bronx. According to him, it is important to start fighting climate change at the community level. Town and city environmental policy is oftentimes less partisan, and environmental cleanup is almost always important to citizens of both political parties. Sustainable policy on a local level is likely easier to understand and has more predictable outcomes than nationwide policy, making it easier to implement than that on a national level.

In response to questions about his ideas for large-scale solutions to climate change, Floam mentioned similar remedies to those described earlier in this thesis. When asked whether he thought a carbon tax would be a viable way for America to cut carbon dioxide emissions, he responded with a yes, but stated that we cannot keep all of our current taxes, suggesting that other taxes must be eliminated before it is implemented. Along with this suggestion, Floam said that he thinks America should reconsider joining the Paris Climate Agreement, but at a reduced cost. When Trump decided to pull out of the agreement, the US had pledged to contribute 3 billion dollars toward development of renewable energy in developing countries, but had only paid 1 billion²⁴. According to him, the agreement would motivate America to seriously fight against climate change, but it is unfair that other polluting countries like China and India would pay less than the United States. That being said, Floam expressed views like those described in this thesis, saying that it is important for America to beat China in this race for sustainability and he agreed that a sense of national pride is a great way to rally republicans to the cause. Floam's view on subsidies differed from the ones expressed in this thesis, but he still presented a change in the current system. He thinks it best to remove all subsidies, including those for fossil fuels, in

²⁴ Schipani, Vanessa. "Trump On The Paris Agreement." *Factcheck*. 7 June, 2017. <https://www.factcheck.org/2017/05/trump-paris-agreement/>

order to let the energy market function on its own. According to Floam, “Renewable is cheap. Let it become big.” While I believe this is not an effective enough solution, it would reduce the advantage fossil fuels have over renewables.

In addition to the potential solutions he offered, Jacob Floam gave a different perspective about why many conservatives flat-out deny climate change or human’s part in it. For many American citizens, their livelihood rests upon coal, oil and gas. People who mine coal or work on oil rigs rely on the success of their company, and ultimately the industry to provide for themselves and their families. Children of these workers are likely to have a similar outlook on this issue. To nobody’s surprise, it remains difficult to convince people that their way of life and support system need to be eliminated or changed for the greater good of America and the world.

The overarching message I got from Floam was that the College Republicans at Fordham University do care deeply about the climate and consider climate change a major issue that must be worked on. While Floam was not as receptive to economic sacrifice to slow or stop climate change, some of his ideas were similar to the ones written in this thesis. While climate change is not one of the most important issues for most Republicans, it remains encouraging that the younger members of the party have a different perspective on the situation.

Chapter 6: Economic Solutions To Climate Change

In this section, I will go into detail as to why ignoring the threat of climate change is costlier than addressing it, and summarize market solutions to the issue and why conservatives should be on board with this. One of the reasons many politicians, interest groups and firms are hesitant to take actions against climate change is the perceived economic downside of acting against an unseen force of nature. People are averse to sinking money into untested solutions that

may or may not work, or projects that will not see immediate or visible positive outcomes.

However, it can be proven that battling climate change is economically worthwhile.

It is imperative to state the goal of policy to combat climate change before I share potential viable solutions. The goal I present is the one provided by the Paris Climate Agreement, which is to limit global warming to a two degrees celsius increase. This goal is projected to cost between 1.5%-4% of the world's income²⁵. The costs are immediate, but the benefits are gradual and subtle, nevertheless important.

Jonathan Harris, Brian Roach and Anne-Marie Codur delve further into the economics of climate change in their article, "The Economics of Global Climate Change," calling carbon dioxide an "externality" and explaining its effect on the economy. An externality is "a side effect or consequence of an industrial or commercial activity that affects other parties without this being reflected in the cost of the goods or services involved," according to Google's dictionary. Externalities are problems because they create financial burdens on the firms that produce them. According to the 1865 court case *Rylands v Fletcher*, externalities must be dealt with by those who cause it, a principle called enterprise liability²⁶. When factories emit carbon, they are polluting the atmosphere, which causes adverse effects in people, thus creating an externality that those factories could potentially be liable for.

The problem with climate-affecting externalities is that it is often difficult or impossible to tell which specific problems are caused by a firm's pollution and which are not. For an example, in the United Kingdom, 1 in 10 cases of lung cancer are caused by outdoor air

²⁵ Harris, Jonathan, M., Brian Roach, and Anne-Marie Codur. "The Economics Of Global Climate Change: A GDAE Teaching Module on Social and Environmental Issues in Economics" *Global Development and Environment Institute*. Medford, MA:Tufts University, 2017.

http://www.ase.tufts.edu/gdae/education_materials/modules/The_Economics_of_Global_Climate_Change.pdf

²⁶ Scruton. "How To Think Seriously About the Planet." 169

pollution. This number is much higher in other countries²⁷. Despite the fact that pollution raises cancer rates, which in turn causes millions of dollars in medical expenses, it is impossible to hold firms accountable for specific cancer cases, leaving this externality essentially unchecked. This problem is particularly bad in Africa and Southeast Asia, where it is estimated that 140,000 people are dying annually from health problems associated with air pollution²⁸.

Harris, Roach and Codur dive deeper into how climate change can affect the global economy by explaining the harm caused by stock pollutants. Stock pollutants accumulate over time and persist after the source of pollution starts because the environment has no efficient way to get rid of them. Sea salt acts as a stock pollutant in low-lying farmlands. As sea levels rise and cases of severe weather increase, island nations will be hit the hardest by this form of pollution. When seawater touches a farm, it leaves salt deposits in the soil that cannot easily be washed away. This phenomenon is called salt degradation, which ruins the agricultural potential of the land, and has effectively killed farming industries in Oceania. Citizens of Kiribati, one of the nations most affected by this, are already emigrating, and the president suggested a move to Fiji for the entire population. Kiribati is an example of how stock pollutants not only destroy economies, but also create climate refugees that other countries must deal with. This is relevant to us for two reasons. Firstly, salt degradation is happening in the United States too, mostly in California, which relies heavily on its agriculture industry. Salt degradation in our country is bound to hurt the economy. Secondly, an increase in climate refugees from Oceania is bound to

²⁷ “How Air Pollution Causes Cancer.” *Cancer Research UK*.
<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/air-pollution-radon-gas-and-cancer/how-air-pollution-can-cause-cancer>

²⁸ Harris, Roach, and Codur. “The Economics Of Global Climate Change: A GDAE Teaching Module on Social and Environmental Issues in Economics.” 2

eventually increase the amount of refugees in the United states, a process that many conservatives would rather avoid.

When discussing the threat of climate change, the damage it has done to island nations is very real, but seems distant. A more relevant cause for concern for Americans is Miami's 400 million dollar expense to protect against "King Tides," October high tides that flood the city. The project, which installed 50-70 pumps from the streets to the ocean, has been successful so far, but has also caused great stress on the taxpayer²⁹. The worsening King Tides can be attributed to sea level rise due to global warming. A 400 million dollar expense in one of America's largest city should be enough to cause any financially aware American concern.

This 400 million dollar government expense is not an isolated incident. Businesses, industries and cities in America are consistently being harmed by climate change. Thirty-one Alaskan towns and cities are at imminent risk of flooding³⁰. More floods around coastal cities make coastal houses less attractive and more of a financial burden for both the buyers and insurers, who have to carry the burden of paying for storm damage. The president of the Reinsurance Association of America stated that "It's clear that global warming could bankrupt the industry."

In fact, people who doubt the certain harm that unchecked climate change will cause should look no further than all major American insurance firms. Firms in every area must incorporate the weather patterns of said area, and in doing so, incorporate the future effects of man-made climate change into their price considerations. All global insurance companies do this.

²⁹ "Miami Successfully Battles Annual King Tide With \$400 Million Project." *NBC News*. 11 October, 2014. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/other/miami-successfully-battles-annual-king-tide-400-million-project-f2D80210818>

³⁰ Harris, Roach, and Codur. "The Economics Of Global Climate Change: A GDAE Teaching Module on Social and Environmental Issues in Economics." 10

This is significant because the insurance industry would reap immediate and great benefits if global warming were to be solved today. The reduction in severe weather would mean less property destruction thus reducing the amount of homes insurance companies would have to pay for. Theoretically, if an individual insurance company ignored climate change projections, they could drastically underprice competitors and make a lot of money in the short term. No firm has done this, demonstrating that it would be foolish for them financially to ignore climate change³¹.

Flooding and storm damage are hardly the only economic harms of climate change. Ocean acidification, caused by the ocean's greater absorption of carbon dioxide, causes coral bleaching and death around the globe. This coral bleaching harms oyster hatcheries, as oysters live together in reef-like formations. These oyster reefs are bleached, which is especially a problem in the Pacific Northwest, as it disrupts the shellfish industry³². Along with this problem, the death of coral reefs result in declining fish populations. Fish consider these reefs their habitat, and without them, many will die or be unable to reproduce, thus harming the fishing industry as well.

One of the most obvious effects of global warming is higher average temperatures, which leads to an increase in wildfires. States in the southwest that are already prone to wildfire should expect more of them in the coming years, leading to billions of dollars in environmental cleanup. A 2016 fire in Fort McMurray, Alberta forced over 88,000 people from their homes and cost Canada 4.4 billion dollars in damages³³. This sort of disaster could happen in the states as well, along with an increase in droughts, which decrease agricultural output, thus hurting the economy.

³¹ Lehrer. "Climate Change: It's Time For A Conservative Alternative."

³² Harris, Roach, and Codur. "The Economics Of Global Climate Change: A GDAE Teaching Module on Social and Environmental Issues in Economics." 11

³³ Snowdon, Wallace. "Fort McMurray Wildfire Costs To Reach Almost \$9B, New Report Says." *CBC*. 17 January, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/fort-mcmurray-wildfire-costs-to-reach-almost-9b-new-report-says-1.3939953>

To decide whether it would be economically worthwhile to implement policy to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, many politicians have recommended conducting a cost-benefit analysis on the effects of climate change. According to the San Jose State Department of Economics, a cost-benefit-analysis (CBA) “estimates and totals up the equivalent money value of the benefits and costs to the community of projects to establish whether they are worthwhile³⁴”. Essentially, the financial costs are subtracted from the benefits to determine the financial effect of a project. In order to prove this goal to be economically worthwhile, it must be shown that implementing policy to reduce emissions costs less overall than doing nothing and allowing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to increase.

However, previous cost-benefit-analyses to determine this have fallen short of accurately predicting the cost of climate change for three primary reasons. First, only about ten percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the US is affected by climate change³⁵. This includes agriculture, fishing, transport and real estate, among others. Manufacturing, service and finance, which happen to be some of our largest industries, are not affected by climate change. This creates the belief that combating climate change is not financially efficient. Second, cost-benefit-analyses put a monetary value on human life, which ends up being between 8-11 million dollars for a person in the United States, and likely less for people in poorer countries. Although the goal of this thesis is not morality or philosophy, it can be assumed that the majority of Americans would find a system that puts monetary value on human life problematic. Finally, too many

³⁴ Watkins, Thayer. *An Introduction To Cost Benefit Analysis*. San Jose State University Department of Economics. July 25, 2008. <http://deimos.apple.com/WebObjects/Core.woa/DownloadTrackPreview/sjsu.edu.1430836165.01624571993.1660641182.pdf>

³⁵ Harris, Roach, and Codur. “The Economics Of Global Climate Change: A GDAE Teaching Module on Social and Environmental Issues in Economics.” 18

immeasurable variables exist that are difficult to factor into a cost-benefit-analysis³⁶. For example, individual natural disasters do not have a direct link to a warming climate, but the two phenomena are firmly linked as a whole. Along with this, the cost of reaching an ecological tipping point cannot be calculated, but the prospect of this is bound to happen if we do not change this planet's environmental future. Because of an indirect link to GDP, moral concerns and the inability to predict the cost of future, but relatively certain events, a typical cost-benefit-analysis will likely prove ineffective in determining whether it is worthwhile to implement economic policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

A function that can be implemented to make a more accurate CBA is the marginal abatement cost. The marginal abatement cost (MAC) is the cost of reducing a single unit of pollution. This can be compared to the cost of not reducing it³⁷. Although this thesis does not produce a CBA of climate change with MACs factored in, I will suggest that a qualified individual do it in order to produce a more accurate piece of data that can be used to better determine the economic impacts of climate change. While it is impossible to predict specific weather events in the future, patterns in the climate do allow us to understand that certain industries and countries will be affected greatly by climate change, and that economic policy must be implemented to counter this.

A possible solution proposed by William Nordhaus is labelled "ramping up," and involves gradually decreasing emissions in the short term and then "ramping it up," or more rapidly decreasing them in the long term. Nordhaus proposed an initial USD 21 tax per ton of

³⁶ Harris, Roach, and Codur. "The Economics Of Global Climate Change: A GDAE Teaching Module on Social and Environmental Issues in Economics." 17

³⁷ Ibid., 20

carbon, increasing that tax gradually³⁸. This is based on an average temperature rise of 3 degrees Celsius by 2100, enough to cause significant impacts on the world.

British economist Nicholas Stern wants a more drastic approach to this issue, as demonstrated in his “The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change.” Stern states that the benefits of strong early action outweigh those of doing nothing. According to him, inaction damage is equivalent to losing 5% of the world’s GDP each year, until something is done³⁹. He defends this harsh position by using the precautionary principle, which states that if an outcome can be catastrophic, we should avoid it, despite whether or not it seems unlikely. This is particularly relevant in the climate change discussion because there are many unknown but potentially disastrous effects of inaction.

Although they would likely be very effective, carbon taxes and cap-and-trade programs seem unfavorable to people who are strongly against government regulations. In their eyes, taxes and regulation on corporations punish businesses for being successful and stifle economic growth. However, conservatives should note that the negatives that come with a carbon tax will be met with immediate positives for Americans. Obviously, a tax has to be allocated to somewhere, and in many of the proposed carbon taxes, the money generated from taxing the corporations will go directly to the American family. Conservatives may not be happy that businesses will get an extra tax, but their voters will be in favor of policy that gives them money. Conservative politicians should take advantage of policies like this, as they not only seem reasonable in the eyes of liberals, but also have the opportunity to appeal to voters who want to increase the size of their wallets. Information on a carbon tax of this sort is explained earlier in the thesis, on page 10.

³⁸ Ibid., 29

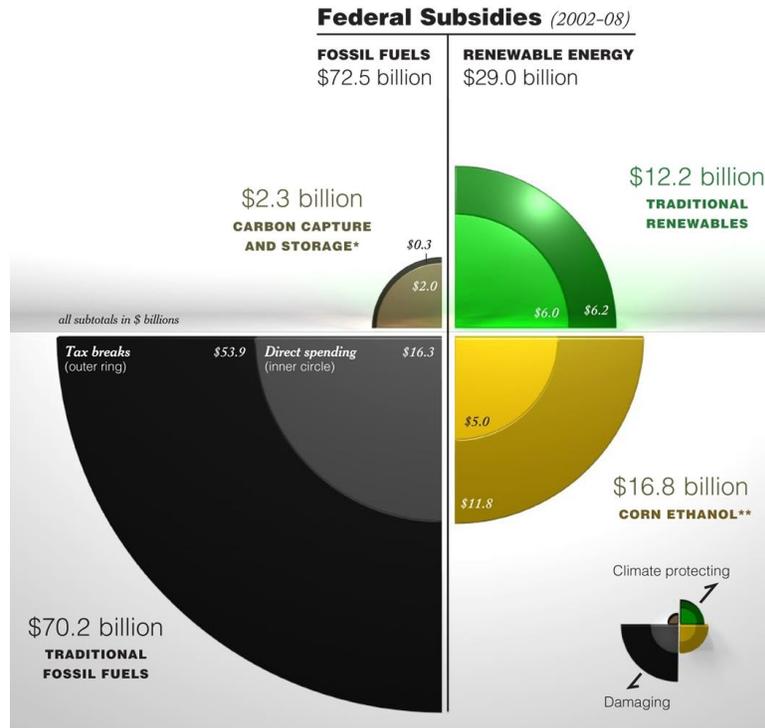
³⁹ Ibid., 28

While at least one of these two solutions (carbon tax/cap-and-trade) should likely be adopted in the United States to sharply cut carbon emissions, other solutions exist, including subsidies, fuel economy standards and technology transfer. Shifting of subsidies should be a non-controversial solution that most Americans can support. Right now, the fossil fuel industry is heavily subsidized by the government, allowing the industry to boom and keeping their prices competitive. On the other hand, non-carbon based energy sources have very few subsidies in the United States. According to the Environmental Law Institute, from 2002-2008, fossil fuels in the USA had 72.5 billion dollars in subsidies while renewable energy had only 29 billion⁴⁰. If the government were to shift subsidies from fossil fuels to clean energy, it would create a sequence of events eventually leading to clean energy being highly competitive in the market. If clean energy is cheaper, it will sell more, leading to a stronger standing in the economy and more willingness to develop it technologically, thus making the energy more efficient. Subsidies on non-carbon-based energy would not eliminate competition from fossil fuel, but would raise the percentage of electricity in the USA generated by renewables and nuclear up from 37%⁴¹.

⁴⁰ Roberts, David. "Fossil Fuel Subsidies Dwarf Clean Energy Subsidies; Obama Wants To Eliminate Them." *Grist*. 23 September, 2009. <https://grist.org/article/2009-09-22-fossil-fuel-subsidies-dwarf-clean-energy-subsidies-obama-wants/>

⁴¹ "What Is U.S. Electricity Generation By Energy Source?" *Energy Information Administration*. 7 March, 2018. <https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=427&t=3>

Figure 1: Federal Energy Subsidies in America from 2002-2008



Environmental Law Institute - From Grist.org

In order for renewable energy to be more cost-effective, more research must be done.

Government-funded research and development programs in this area could lead to progress in the physical efficiency of energy harnessing and developments in technology. Doing so would help commercialization of renewable energy and make it more competitive in the market.

Another way we can positively influence the fight against climate change without actually changing US environmental policy is a process called technology transfer. This involves supplying developing countries with the technological means to transition to renewable energy⁴². This process is so important because when developing nations industrialize, they often rely on fossil fuel as their energy source, as it is easy to find and cheap to extract. This creates a problem because economic prosperity of citizens is such an important goal for developing countries, and almost all world leaders put the well-being of their country before that of others. However, if

⁴² Harris, Roach, and Codur. "The Economics Of Global Climate Change: A GDAE Teaching Module on Social and Environmental Issues in Economics." 42

developing countries had the means to implement renewable energy into their economy, it would allow them to skip the fossil fuel stage of their development and join the fight against climate change.

Technology transfer solves two problems; the one detailed above, but also the hesitancy of many Americans to join the Paris Climate Agreement. Some conservatives are hesitant to join the agreement because they believe it puts an unfair burden on our country while developing countries get a free pass to pollute⁴³. They do not want the US to be regulated while others remain free to pollute. Technology transfer solves this because it allows developing countries to get up to speed energy-wise while also holding them accountable in the agreement. If all countries have accountability in the Paris Climate Agreement, I believe many Americans would be more okay with a decision to join.

Conclusion

Climate change is such a widespread and profound problem that the world must make plans to counter it. This thesis considers many approaches and solutions to the issue that do not harm the economy, even stimulating it at times. I presented these type of solutions to demonstrate to conservatives that there are ways to fight climate change without disrupting their way of life or harming the economy. However, it is important to remember that we cannot expect to fight a powerful force of nature (although it is mostly man-made) without making sacrifices. These may be economic, tax related or lifestyle related, but we must remember that fixing the damage done to the climate is not as simple as waving a magic wand or throwing money at a problem. Eventually, we must transition from fossil fuels to renewables completely. Coal, oil and

⁴³ Floam, Jacob. 21 February, 2018.

natural gas are finite, and are also huge emitters of carbon dioxide when burnt. This transition will be difficult, but is necessary for securing a sustainable future for our children. That being said, the economic solutions presented here do give hope that we can kill three birds with one stone; fighting the global problem of climate change, bolstering America's economy and innovating for the future.

I aimed to provide an answer for people who wonder why conservative Americans should care about anthropogenic climate change, and why fighting it would be in their best interests. First of all, climate change has already resulted in climate refugees around the world especially in places such as Oceania. While most of these refugees are not immigrating to America, those from Mexico and other Central American countries very likely will. With drought expected to increase in the coming decades and destroy farmland, both legal and illegal immigrants will come to America from south of the border. If conservatives want to limit illegal immigration and avoid a refugee crisis, fighting climate change is in their best interest. Conservatives often argue that using resources to fight climate change will harm the economy. However, they fail to take into account the fact that ignoring climate change will decimate multiple large American industries, including fishing, farming, transport and real estate. Ten percent of our GDP will likely be greatly affected by climate change. However, fighting climate change will likely cost much less than that. Finally, Republican politicians need to understand that young Republican voters have different opinions on climate change than the older generation; opinions that will increasingly get more important as they become a larger part of the voting base. In order to get elected or reelected, these politicians should likely rethink their position on the issue of climate change.

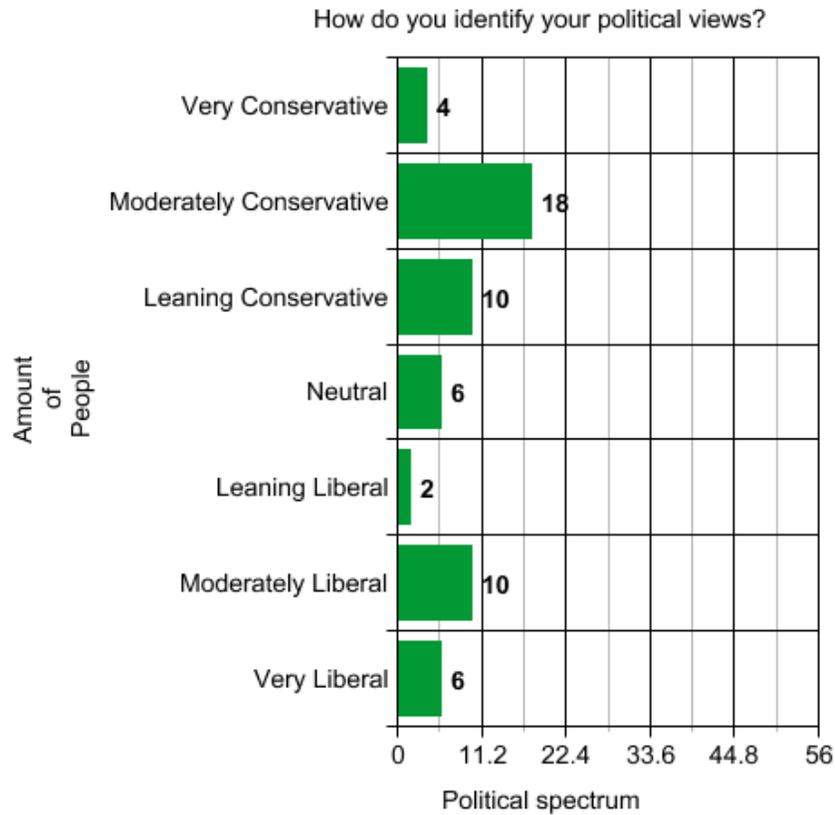
In the section about economic solutions, I dispelled the myth that large economic sacrifices must be made in order to fight climate change. A carbon tax that gives the collected money to the family is a great way to bolster hard working middle-class Americans. Along with this, subsidy transfer to clean energy will allow it to be more economically viable and compete with fossil fuels without putting too much tax on the industry. Lastly, technology transfer to developing countries will allow them to innovate and develop clean energy faster, putting less burden on the USA to reduce emissions.

This thesis proved that it is both politically advantageous and economically reasonable for conservatives to join the fight against climate change. But obviously, those two factors are not the only reasons why many conservatives are already working hard to fight against climate change. It is our duty as humans to care for each other and the world around us. The planet is in trouble. Our country is in trouble. And the noble thing to do, the *right* thing to do, is to work as hard as we can to help. Let us work together, liberal and conservative, to leave something behind that makes us proud.

“Together we can build a world we want, a world we’re proud to leave our children and grandchildren.” – Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General

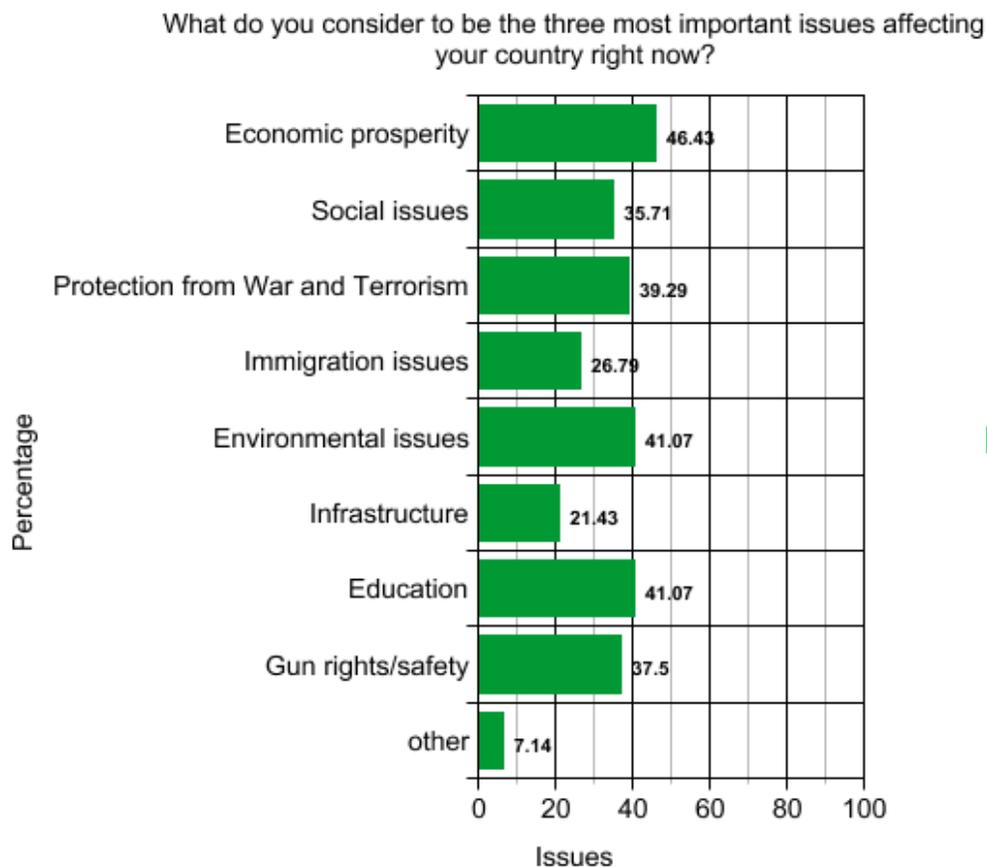
Appendix

Figure 2: Political Views of Respondents on a Left-Right Scale



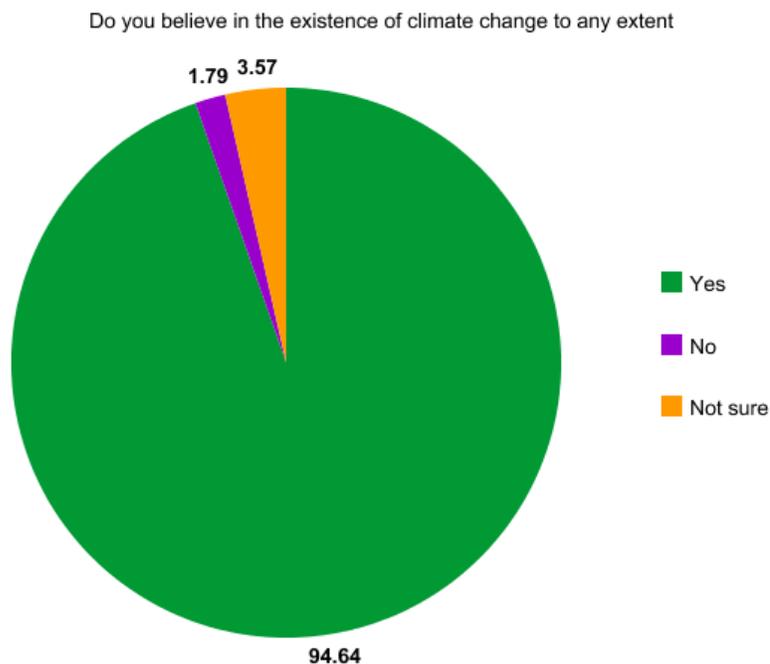
This graph explains the breakdown of the political views of the respondents. As one can see, people from all sides of the political spectrum answered the survey, but the majority were conservative, most likely because the link was sent to the Fordham University College Republicans and shared to conservatives. The exact breakdown tallies 32 respondents on the right, 18 on the left and 6 neutral responders.

Figure 3: Most Important Issues Facing America According to Respondents



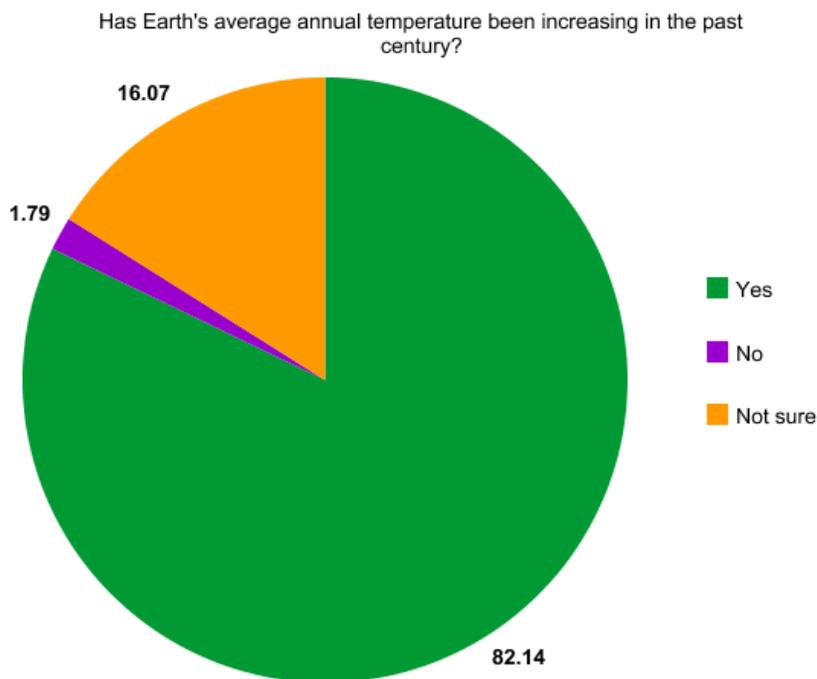
I wanted to know the political priorities of each respondent. The goal stemmed from the question, “How much do people already care about climate change?” It is difficult to change a person’s opinion without knowing enough about their original opinion. People obviously are concerned about numerous issues, but I wanted to know which ones respondents felt the most crucial. Economic prosperity ranked first, with 46.43% of respondents ranking it in their top three, followed by education and environmental issues, which both had 41.07% of respondents ranking it in their three major issues.

Figure 4: Respondents' Views on the Existence of Climate Change



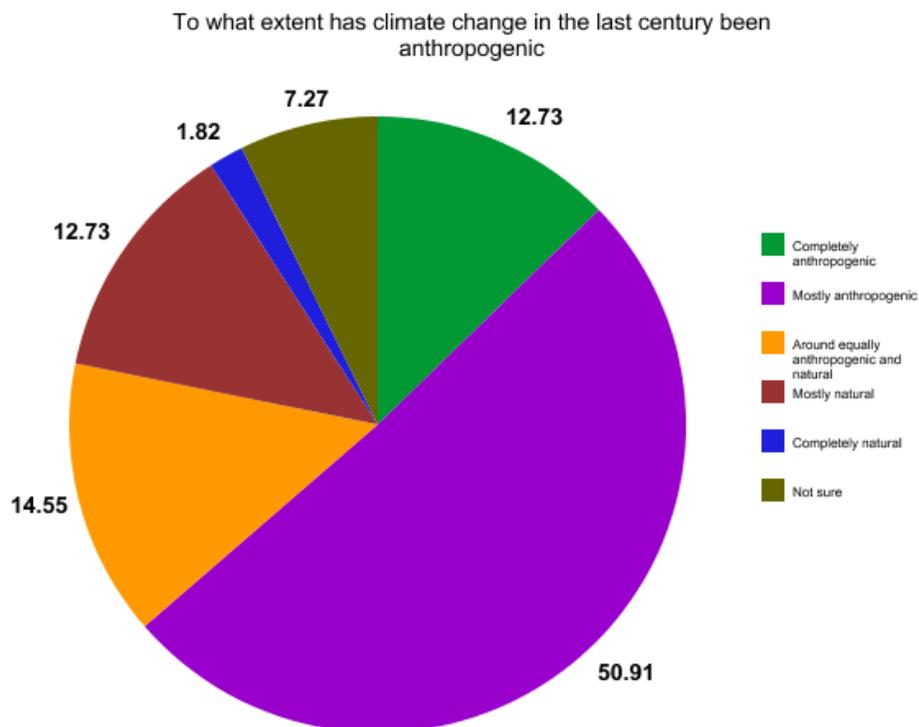
The purpose of this question and the next two are to figure out how many conservatives understand the basics of climate change, which would make the argument in favor of fighting climate change significantly easier. The responses to this question ended up being what I had hoped for. 94% of the total respondents picked that they believed in climate change to some extent. Breaking it down further, over 90% of conservatives picked that response, which makes it more likely that most of the conservatives surveyed will at least be receptive to the basic premise of my argument.

Figure 5: Respondents' Views on Climate Change in the Past Century



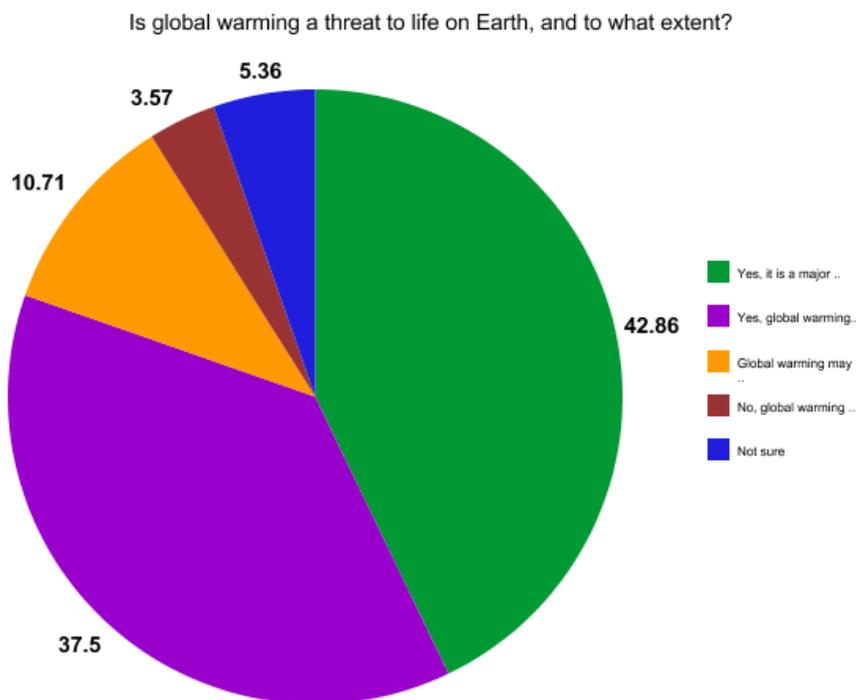
The purpose of this question was to further clarify respondents' understanding of climate change. While the percentage of people with beliefs consistent to the established science dropped, over 80% still said yes, which included over 70% of the conservatives surveyed. In addition to this, no conservatives outright denied the temperature increase (The "no" came from someone who was politically neutral).

Figure 6: Respondents' Views on Whether Recent Climate Change has been Anthropogenic



The premise of this question is self-explanatory. I wanted to figure out whether respondents believe we actually have an impact in this phenomenon. 78% of respondents replied that humans have at least a sizeable impact on climate change, with 65% of conservatives either saying that climate change is completely anthropogenic, mostly anthropogenic or influenced by humans and natural causes a similar amount. In short, almost two out of three conservatives surveyed believe that we do have the power to change the climate. These conservatives are the demographic I am targeting.

Figure 7: Respondents' Views on Whether Global Warming is a Threat to Life on Earth



Yes, it is a major threat to lives of millions of species and the existence of their habitats =42.86%

Yes, global warming poses a threat to some, but definitely not all species on Earth = 37.5%

Global warming may be a threat to a small amount of species, but not enough to significantly impact any ecosystem = 10.71%

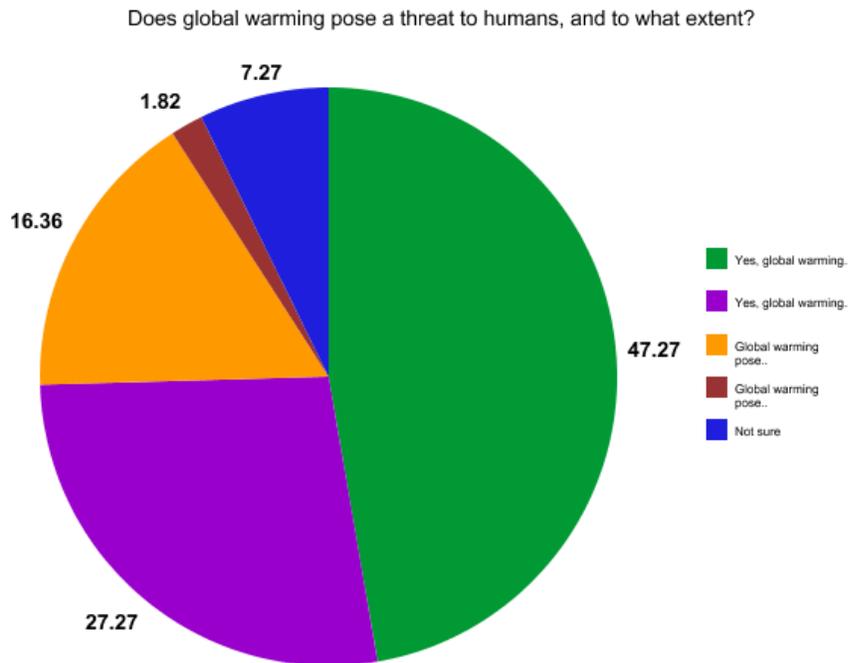
No, global warming poses no threat to any species = 3.57%

Not sure = 5.36%

Questions 6 and 7 are meant to gauge concern. The goal was to understand whether conservatives see global warming as a threat, or just as a phenomenon not worth time or money.

Over 80% of respondents believed that global warming is a threat to life on Earth to a major extent.

Figure 8: Respondents' Views on Whether Global Warming is a Threat to Humans



Yes, global warming poses a threat to the lives and livelihoods of billions of people = 47.27%

Yes, global warming poses a threat to people living in some countries, cities or communities = 27.27%

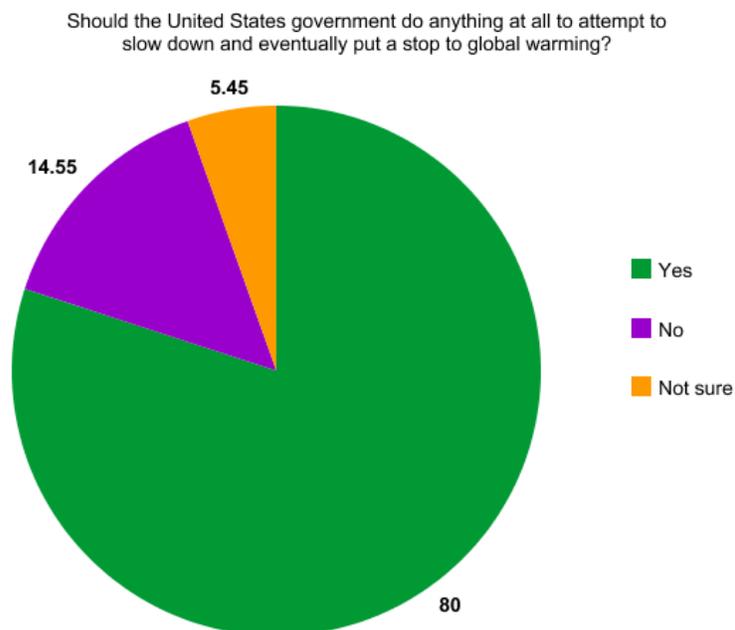
Global warming poses a minor threat to some people, but not enough to cause concern = 16.36%

Global warming poses zero threat to any humans = 1.82%

Not sure = 7.27%

The premise of this question is similar, but more narrow in scope. The goal is to know whether respondents think climate change harms us. From the graph, it is clear that almost three out of four respondents believed that global warming is a moderate to major threat. Almost 57% of conservatives thought the same thing. This is a moderate decrease from the amount who acknowledged that we can cause climate change, but it still demonstrates that more than half of conservatives surveyed understand the dangers of climate change to an extent. Even those who picked unsure or that global warming poses a minor or zero threat to humans could still learn about some of the threats stated in this paper.

Figure 9: Respondents' Views on Whether the US Government should Work to Stop Global Warming



The final multiple-choice question was to see whether respondents were already on board with government intervention in climate change. The chart shows that four out of five respondents thought that the US government should take action on climate change. 64% of conservative respondents also chose "yes" This is optimistic, and will likely make it easier for me to outline what should be done. Reasons for such a high number of supportive conservatives could be that many of the respondents were likely young. No data was collected about age, but many college Republicans took the survey, along with young people on Facebook.

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