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Prospects for Climate Change Policy Reform

A Landscape Study of the Conservative Environmental Movement

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Executive Summary

Climate policy in the United States is in a time of great uncertainty. The Trump administration has moved to roll back much of the policy momentum the sector had experienced in previous administrations. After a number of years of climate policy being a relatively low priority for voters, its salience is rising on the left as progressives move toward a strategy of yoking climate to a larger set of progressive priorities in the form of the Green New Deal. However, as this report explains, such a broad and multi-issue message is less effective with conservatives and may also polarize opinion on some aspects of climate response where bipartisan support had existed. The narrower messages focused on innovation and energy reforms which reach many conservatives, on the other hand, may become less acceptable on the left if they are seen as an alternative to or negation of some of the economic and social policy ideas in the Green New Deal.

Against this intensely polarized landscape, this report analyzes the under-studied conservative side of the aisle to provide insight into the future prospects for cross-partisan efforts at climate policymaking.

The right-leaning environmental movement is largely still playing defense against the Trump administration, both at the level of federal policy and in the struggle for the future of conservative thinking on energy policy. Conservative reform organizations are relatively limited in infrastructure and resources. Efforts to reach conservative voters and influencers are disparate and have proceeded according to a number of different theories of change and understandings of how conservative policy evolves.

Eventual progress will require cross-partisan cooperation, but there currently exists a significant amount of distrust between advocates on the left and the right, who report having relatively few connections beyond a few high-profile efforts. Addressing these realities will be the first steps toward charging up what is currently a tough sled for those looking for fundable opportunities and change by building conservative or bipartisan efforts.

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Data and Polling on the Current Support for Climate Change

The available data and polling in the conservative climate sector provide more questions than answers at times. Our key findings include:

- More conservatives support climate change solutions—more than 50 percent in some subcategories—than are willing to say that climate change is real and man-made, indicating that a solutions-based approach, rather

than a belief-based approach (who caused it), is more effective for this target audience.

- Advocates for climate change solutions must communicate differently with conservatives than with liberals in order to identify and organize them around cross-partisan solutions. Current data indicate that the most effective communication for identifying and organizing conservative support relies on values-based conservative frameworks such as purity, messages that hearken to the past, and solutions such as renewable energy.

- While the two are not interchangeable, there is less support for a carbon tax than for renewable energy, though some conservative groups and elites are focused on a carbon tax as a policy solution.

- Effective targeting of efforts to identify and organize conservative support for climate change solutions requires a more nuanced categorization of voters than party affiliation or voting history. Pew's 2017 Political Typology[1] is a useful place to start. Identifying characteristics of conservative climate supporters and developing modeling based on those characteristics could provide a useful refinement of our understanding of conservative subgroups.

Section 3: Corporate Climate Leaders

Efforts to engage conservatives on climate change policy reform typically assume a leading role for business and corporate leaders. A cross-partisan model of environmental-business engagement held sway for decades on other issues. However, companies have been less willing to provide leadership on climate policy. Changing consumer attitudes are a major driving force behind corporation action on climate change, and will continue to be in the future. This trend is additionally supported by the historical, and increasingly large, role corporations see themselves playing in making an impact in the communities in which their employees live and work.

Section 4: State and Local Progress on Climate Change

With the federal government abdicating the central role in moving the space forward, states have begun to pick up the slack.

- States are increasingly taking active leadership on the issue of climate change. Importantly, this progress has not slowed since the 2016 elections, with states experimenting with policies designed to curb emissions and provide incentives for new technologies to flourish.

- Nevertheless, state and local level organizations are having trouble replicating their success, as the strategies necessary for policy change vary by state. To date, efforts for cross-partisan organizing have not been built for scale.

- Three key areas that will need investment to successfully power a replicable model for the climate policy movement, including a power analysis of state-level dynamics, medium-term trust and relationship building, and improving the quality and depth of state-level data.

Section 5: U.S. Landscape of Center-Right Organizations and Funders

The final section examines the universe of center-right organizations and funders to determine, within the landscape of the environmental policy sector, whether there are opportunities for success.

A useful way to understand conservative reform efforts in the space is to analyze them in three categories:

- The Associations approach attempts to mobilize around a previously existing identity (e.g., veterans).

- The Libertarian approach focuses on appealing to the limited government leanings of individuals on the right to advocate for reform.

- Arguably the strongest of the three approaches, the Innovation approach focuses on investing in new science and technologies to address our climate challenges.

- The key structural barriers in the sector include the intensely partisan atmosphere, a lack of strong organizations, and a dearth of strategic funders.

Despite incremental gains and some conservative activism in this policy area, the current partisan environment has created a deep lack of trust that hampers coalition-building. Actors in the conservative environmental movement face challenges in making serious inroads at the national level. There is a lack of funding in the space, and accordingly, a relative lack of strong organizations providing strategic investment opportunities. Nevertheless, the leadership from leaders at the state level and in the business community indicates that there is momentum in the sector that will sustain beyond the current administration.

Any question of policy must start with understanding how the increasingly partisan atmosphere affects efforts for policy reform. On the issue of the environment, we are specifically engaged in the question of whether conservatives can be a healthy part of the marketplace. With a national leadership that has thrown the environmental policy landscape into chaos, there are significant challenges to strategically moving the conservative base to action on these issues.

The analysis below comprises firsthand interviews with those directly engaged in the climate reform space—on the left and the right—as well as secondary research from available polling, studies, and news coverage on the various components of this paper.

A Note on Methodology

We undertook this research not to present a comprehensive picture of climate advocacy, but to specifically focus on right-of-center organizations, attitudes, and strategies. We began with a core assumption that the sector is not a mirror image of the nonpartisan or progressive climate communities, which would require a different analytical lens. We employed two analytical tools. To consider the health of the conservative energy/climate ecosystem, we used the data-driven assessment tools for public policy and impact investing developed by Byrd and Invest America,[2] specialists in building and sustaining large cross-partisan endeavors. To understand the prospects and challenges posed in attempting to build a cross-partisan climate movement, we relied on the theory of transpartisanship set out by Hurlburt and others[3] at New America's New Models of Policy Change project.[4]

Those analytic frameworks led us to first target right-of-center groups, and second target funders who support groups that they perceive as right-of-center or as influential with right-of-center audiences. Our background research included exploration of public opinion and attitudes among voters identifying as right-of-center, as well as a range of strategies employed in targeting those voters on climate and other issues. We sought to understand how those strategies are perceived by conservative audiences, and to document their inroads in areas like state and local governments, businesses, and security and faith communities. We observed—and we note as a recommendation—that the datasets available to analyze both policy substance and political alliances operating at the state level are inadequate to the task.

Because our lens is that of effectiveness with right-of-center audiences, some of our conclusions may be unexpected when viewed through a climate-advocacy lens. Our intent is to spur further analysis and creativity in a field whose basic theory of change was, in many cases, set in place under political circumstances quite different from what we currently face.

Section 1: Introduction

While in office, the Trump administration has made a concerted effort to cut programs and regulations designed to protect the environment.

This reversal of course from the policies of the Obama administration has created significant uncertainty for other countries and for the corporate world. Despite being one of the largest contributors to climate change, the United States has become an unreliable partner in the fight to solve this global problem. The international community is pressing ahead on the kind of agenda envisaged at Paris, one that combines public, NGO, and inter-governmental pressure to achieve progress through government-set targets and regulations, public-private partnerships, and resource transfers from wealthier to less-wealthy nations. This coexists with an assumption—encouraged by many U.S. voices—that Washington will return to the international climate arena with roughly the same policy approach it had in 2008-2016. The business community has also had to deal with the vicissitudes of environmental policy.

Despite being one of the largest contributors to climate change, the United States has become an unreliable partner in the fight to solve this global problem.

Section 2: Data and Polling on the Current Support for Climate Change

Key Takeaways

1. More conservatives support climate change solutions—more than 50 percent in some subcategories—than are willing to say that climate change is real and man-made, indicating that a solutions-based approach, rather than a belief-based approach, is more effective for this target audience.

2. Advocates for climate change solutions must communicate differently with conservatives than with liberals in order to identify and organize them around cross-partisan solutions. Current data indicate that the most effective communication for identifying and organizing conservative support relies on values-based, conservative frameworks such as purity, messages that hearken to the past, and solutions such as renewable energy.

3. Though some conservative groups and elites are focused on a carbon tax as a policy solution, public opinion research shows conservatives are more likely to support renewable energy policies (understanding that the two are not interchangeable).

4. Effective targeting of efforts to identify and organize conservative support for climate change solutions requires an ability to look at subgroups of conservative voters with more nuance than party affiliation or voting history typically provide.

In this section, we examine how conservatives in America feel about climate change by investigating publicly available research and polling. It is worth noting that researchers draw wildly different conclusions based on the existing data. For example, ClearPath Polling asserts that 68 percent of Republican voters support accelerating development and use of clean energy,[5] and that organizing conservatives around this issue is a key element of mitigating climate change. While David Roberts argues that persuading conservatives to support action on climate change is impossible and cannot be part of the solution at all,[6] early polling from Yale suggests that 81 percent of registered voters support Green New Deal goals, including 64 percent of Republicans and 57 percent of conservative Republicans—at least when the study was framed in positives and did not discuss which politicians support the deal.[7]

In spite of several deficits in the existing data and the differing conclusions drawn from the data in the community of climate change advocates, journalists, and researchers, we were able to glean key takeaways about conservative public opinion that may help light the path toward conservative engagement on climate change solutions. We also offer a roadmap for filling in gaps in the research to further illuminate that path.

Landscape of Existing Research

Climate change is a complex issue. We have organized the existing research into three categories. These are:

- Belief and Intensity: This category encompasses the degree to which respondents believe climate change is real or man-made, the level of concern about the issue, and the degree to which they prioritize climate change relative to other public policy issues.

- Messages and Messengers: Research on the impact of particular words, message frames, and types of people delivering climate change messages on the public's support for action on climate change.

- Solutions: Assessment of support for particular policy responses to the problem of climate change.

We first present results from existing research within these three categories. Then we move to a discussion of typology, specifically the emergent practice of looking at subcategories that are more narrow than "conservative" or "Republican" in order to better understand conservative opinion on climate change and identify pockets of support for reform.

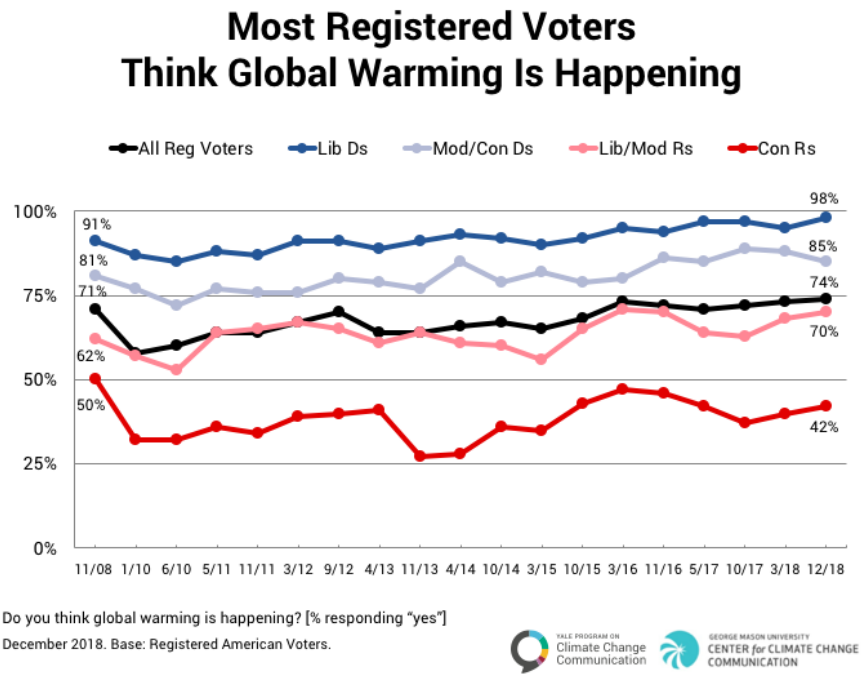
Climate change polling has approximately a 35-year history. During this time, consistent use of polling questions within four thematic areas has allowed for the longitudinal study of the American electorate broadly (i.e., without respect to political ideology) across large increments of time (years and decades). However, the thematic areas that have been used consistently by researchers are disproportionately focused within the belief and solutions categories, with the majority in the belief category. In fact, three of the thematic areas that have been used consistently fall within the belief category. The four thematic areas are:

- Awareness and knowledge of climate change

- The extent to which respondents believe it is occurring

- Level of concern about the problem and the priority of climate change
- Support for specific types of policy response.[8]

What We Know About Conservative Opinion



Source: Graphic courtesy of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and George Mason University's report, "Politics & Global Warming, December 2018" (2019).

Belief

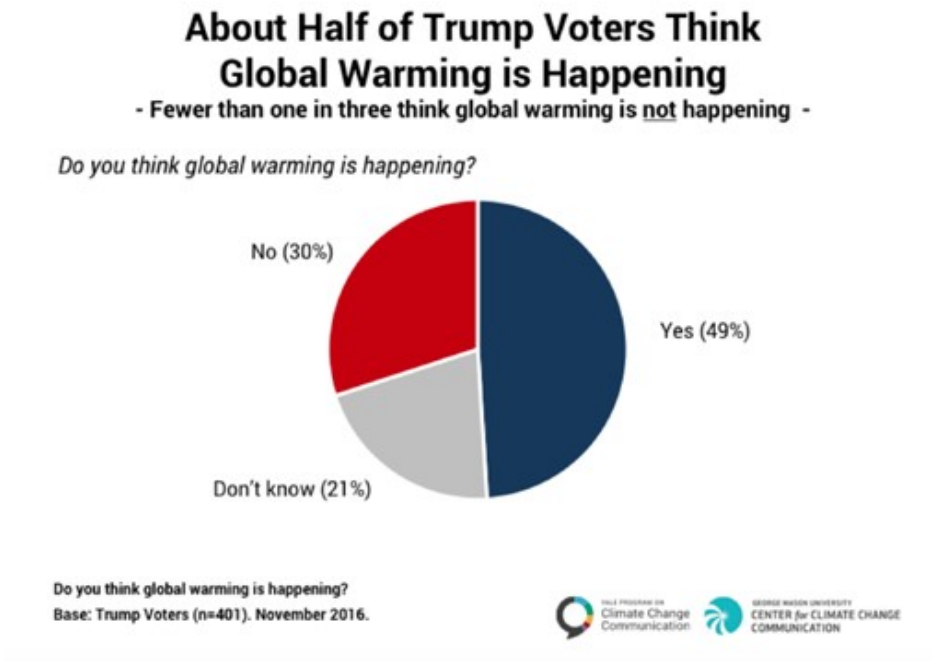
A majority of registered voters believe that global warming is happening.[9] But polarization among conservatives is significant:

- 98 percent of liberal Democrats
- 85 percent of moderate/conservative Democrats
- 70 percent of liberal/moderate Republicans
- 42 percent of conservative Republicans[10]

Voters have become more polarized since 2008, with the belief that global warming is happening decreasing more sharply among both liberal/moderate Republicans and conservative Republicans—though this trend has begun to reverse since 2017.

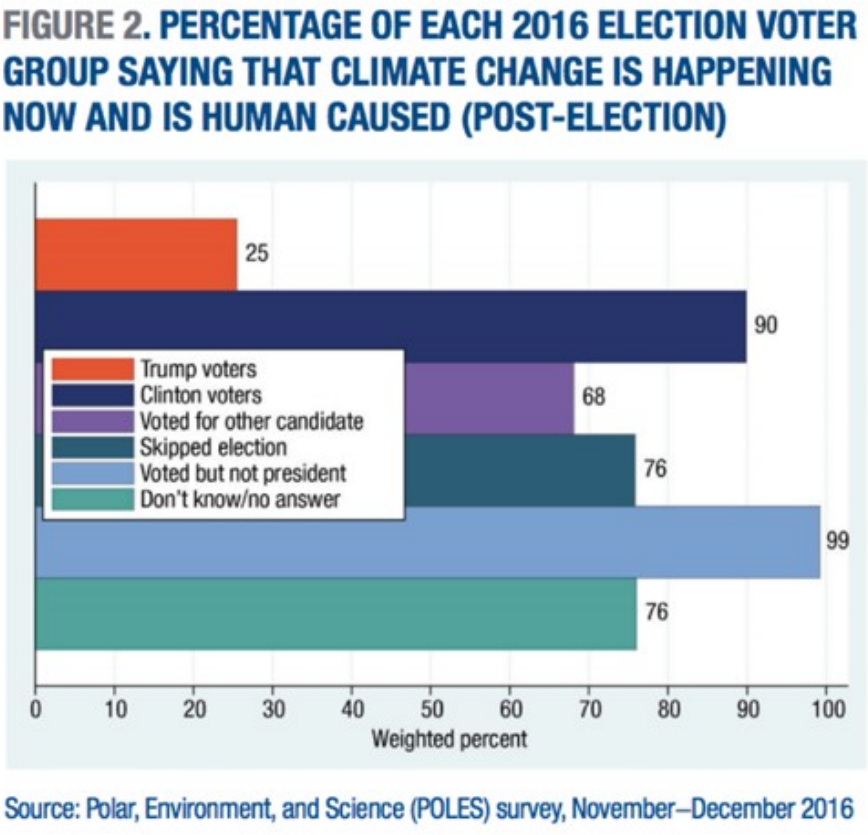
This continues a 30-year trend of polarization.

A separate study by Yale and George Mason University focused on Trump voters found that 49 percent of Trump voters believe that "global warming is happening," and 30 percent disagree.[11]



Source: Graphic courtesy of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and George Mason University's report, "Trump Voters & Global Warming" (2017).

In a post-election study, the University of New Hampshire's Carsey School of Public Policy took a deeper look at candidate choice and belief.[12] The difference between Trump voters and Clinton voters is stark when the belief question is expanded to include two elements: that climate change is both real and that it is caused by humans. Only 25 percent of Trump voters responded that they believe climate change is both real and human-caused, in contrast to 90 percent of Clinton voters.



Source: Graphic courtesy of the University of New Hampshire Carsey School of Public Policy's report "On Renewable Energy and Climate, Trump Voters Stand Apart" (2017).

However, as we will see in the solutions section, we should not confuse belief or lack thereof with support for climate action.

Intensity

The proportion of Americans who are strongly concerned about climate change is rising, but important partisan differences and questions about voting behavior remain.[13] During the 2018 midterms, Gallup found that Democrats ranked climate fifth among issue priorities, while Republicans ranked climate 11th.[14] AEI's 2017 Public Opinion Study found that neither the environment nor climate change were top-tier issues in the public's priorities for the President and Congress, without regard to party affiliation or political ideology.[15] In 2007 and 2015, 38 percent of Americans felt "dealing with global warming" should be a top priority, while only 25 percent believed that in 2012.[16] A 2017 Gallup poll found that only 18 percent of Republicans worry about climate change a great deal.[17]

Messages and Messengers

The task of working against key conservative validators to change opinion on the sources of climate change is a daunting one, particularly in the electoral context, as political scientists David Broockman and Joshua Kalla found. Moreover, advocates have made erroneous assumptions about messaging to conservatives, yielding the opposite of the intended effect. In 2015, Pope Francis released an encyclical calling for climate change action. Both Pope Francis' climate change-focused encyclical, which many advocates saw as a key tool for conservative outreach, and scientific consensus messaging have been found to carry the backlash effect associated with many persuasion treatments among some conservative voters.[18] For example, conservatives who saw the encyclical were less likely to support some of its ideas[19]—like the concept that lower-income populations will suffer from climate change—than conservatives who had not. In response, conservative Catholics, non-Catholics, and pundits questioned whether the Pope was qualified to speak on the issue, as well as the reliability of the science he cited.[20] It is possible that endorsements from leaders already perceived as ideological allies may be more likely to contribute to polarization, instead of productively shifting thinking on the message itself.

Given these limitations, researchers advocate communications that focus on policy solutions—in particular, renewable energy—rather than communicating that climate change is real and man-made. Others have advocated for re-thinking climate communication to root the dialogue in values that speak most deeply to conservatives.

Messaging to Core Conservative Values

A 2016 study conducted by researchers from Cornell University indicates that moral foundations theory may offer viable frameworks to use for mitigating political polarization around climate change.[21] Moral foundations theory (MFT) posits five different classes of moral values: care/harm (compassion/harming); fairness/cheating; in group loyalty/betrayal; authority/subversion; and sanctity/degradation (purity), which suggests that conservatives and liberals operate from different moral frames. The Cornell study points to compassion and fairness as the relevant moral foundation for liberals who support action on climate change and points to the moral foundation of purity (sanctity/degradation) as a potentially useful frame for conservatives.

Additionally, researchers at the University of Cologne found in a 2016 study that conservatives are more responsive to climate messages rooted in the past, while liberals were more responsive to forward-looking climate change messages.[22]

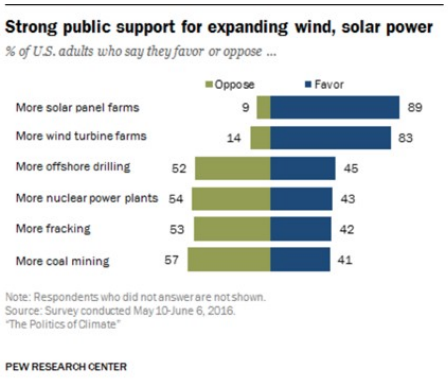
A growing body of research focused primarily on belief, as opposed to solutions, finds that the electorate is responsive to elite cues. In a November 2017 study,

Michael Tesler found that political interest significantly predicts both conservatives' skepticism about, and liberals' belief in, climate change.[23]

Messaging for Solutions

A study published in June of 2017 by Graham Dixon, Jay Hmielowski, and Yanni Ma found that popular "scientific consensus messaging" (e.g., 97 percent of scientists agree that climate change is real and man-made) did not produce significant effects among U.S. conservatives.[24] Free market solutions to climate change were found to be more effective at improving conservatives' climate change acceptance.

In 2016, the Pew Research Center found bipartisan support for expanding wind and solar power, as reflected in the graph below.[25]



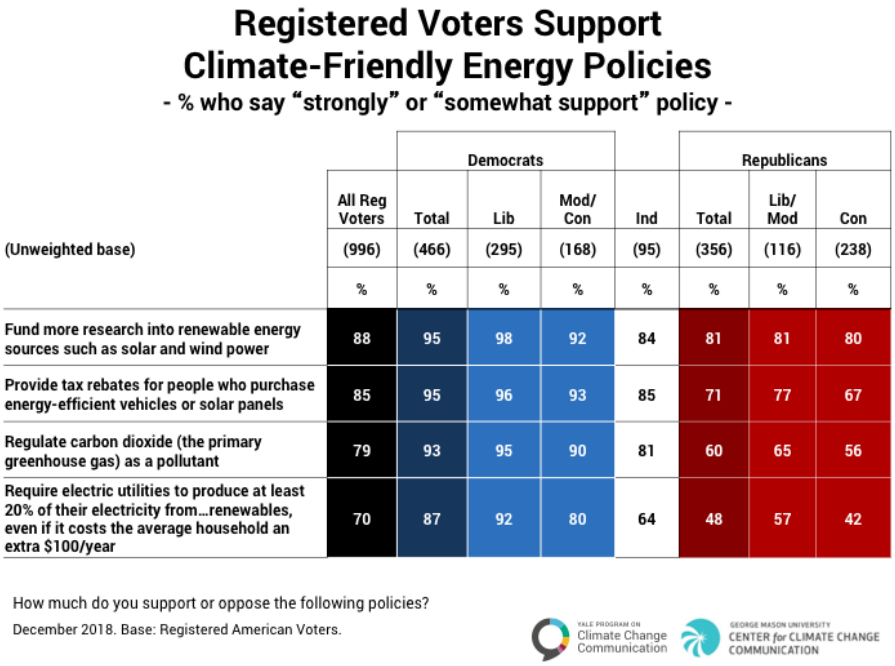
Source: Graphic courtesy of the Pew Research Center's report "The Politics of Climate" (2016)

In 2018 and 2019, polling found conservative support for many (though not all) of the policy goals that the left has united in "Green New Deal" proposals. For example, this paragraph won approval from 64 percent of Republicans, including 57 percent of conservative Republicans:

"Some members of Congress are proposing a "Green New Deal" for the U.S. They say that a Green New Deal will produce jobs and strengthen America's economy by accelerating the transition from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy. The Deal would generate 100% of the nation's electricity from clean, renewable sources within the next 10 years; upgrade the nation's energy grid, buildings, and transportation infrastructure; increase energy efficiency; invest in green technology research and development; and provide training for jobs in the new green economy."[26]

Crucially, these outcomes do not translate into conservative support for the Green New Deal, about which voters hear partisan messages through partisan channels. In their 2017 meta-analysis of 49 field experiments, including nine original studies, Broockman and Kalla find zero persuasive effect from campaign contact and advertising designed to persuade voters on Americans' candidate choices in general elections.[27] However, recent polling suggests that, at least around the GND, media consumption does have an impact on conservative views of the policies. The overwhelming majority of voters (82 percent) hadn't heard of the GND as of December 2018,[28] but Fox News viewers are more likely to have a strong reaction. Among registered voters who watch Fox, 74 percent oppose it, with 64 percent opposing strongly and only 21 percent have no opinion, as

opposed to voters who don't watch the channel, of whom 22 percent support the policy, 29 percent are opposed, and 49 percent are unsure.[29]



Registered Voters Support Climate-Friendly Energy Policies

- % who say "strongly" or "somewhat support" policy -

		Democrats				Republicans		
	All Reg Voters	Total	Lib	Mod/ Con	Ind	Total	Lib/ Mod	Con
(Unweighted base)	(996)	(466)	(295)	(168)	(95)	(356)	(116)	(238)
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fund more research into renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power	88	95	98	92	84	81	81	80
Provide tax rebates for people who purchase energy-efficient vehicles or solar panels	85	95	96	93	85	71	77	67
Regulate carbon dioxide (the primary greenhouse gas) as a pollutant	79	93	95	90	81	60	65	56
Require electric utilities to produce at least 20% of their electricity from…renewables, even if it costs the average household an extra $100/year	70	87	92	80	64	48	57	42

How much do you support or oppose the following policies?

December 2018. Base: Registered American Voters.

YALE PROGRAM ON Climate Change Communication

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY CENTER for CLIMATE CHANGE COMMUNICATION

Source: Graphic courtesy of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and George Mason University's report, "Politics & Global Warming, December 2018" (2019).

This fits a longstanding pattern—renewable energy solutions poll high among conservatives. Though some conservatives advocate a carbon tax, it doesn't poll as well—coming in at just under 50 percent. When it comes to renewables, however, a variety of options poll relatively well. A December 2018 Yale report[30] on politics and global warming found that:

- 81 percent of Republicans support funding more research on renewable energy
- 71 percent of Republicans support providing tax rebates to people who purchase energy-efficient vehicles or solar panels
- 60 percent of Republicans support regulating carbon dioxide as a pollutant
- 48 percent of Republicans support setting strict carbon dioxide emission limits on existing coal-fired power plants to reduce global warming and

improve public health, even if the cost of electricity to consumers and companies would likely increase

- 49 percent of Republicans support requiring fossil fuel companies to pay a carbon tax and using the money to reduce other taxes (such as income tax) by an equal amount

Typology: Simple analysis along party lines or based on voting behavior obscures important nuances within broad categories such as "Republican" or "Trump voter." A more nuanced look at voter characteristics is required in order to assess the potential for action on climate change among conservatives. For example, in response to the Fourth National Climate Assessment,[31] a 2017 article [32] cited this 2015 Gallup Poll[33] demonstrating that the more education conservatives have, the *less likely* they are to believe that climate change is real. Egan and Mullins' 2017 review of research findings and polling data about Americans' attitudes on climate change found that, after controlling for partisanship, gender and religiosity were the strongest predictors of climate change attitudes.[34] Some studies divide liberals and conservatives into two categories, but they still rely on a fairly limited and linear range that considers only liberal-ness and conservative-ness as differentiating characteristics without considering other characteristics that might influence attitudes on climate change.

Pew's 2017 Political Typology[35] is more useful than party or voting behavior for understanding where the potential lies for climate action within the spectrum of conservative voters because, while it still yields a scale from most to least conservative, it does a strong job of classifying voters into categories. It breaks those on the political right and the political left into four categories each, with bystanders occupying middle ground. In descending order from most to least conservative, the nine categories are:

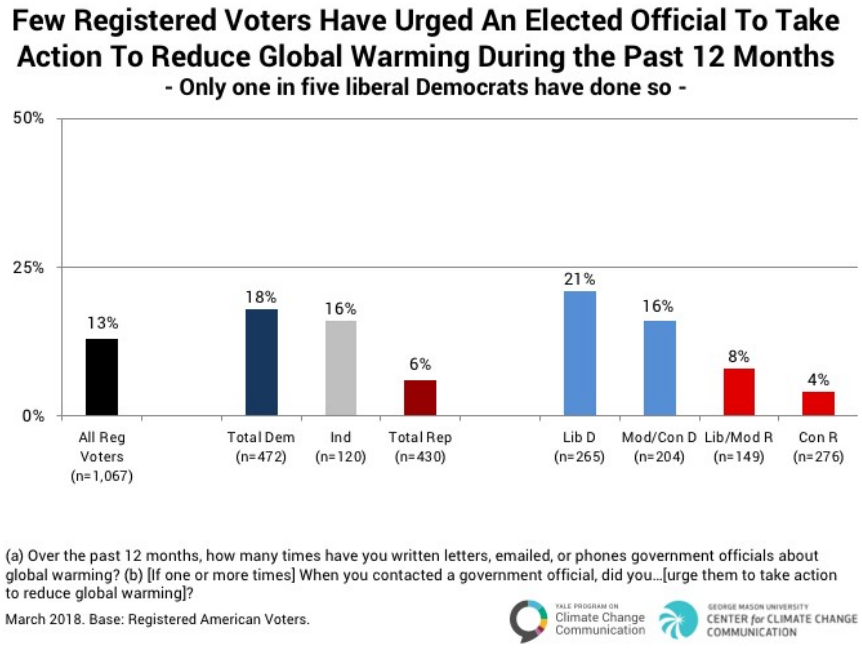
- Core Conservative
- Country First Conservative
- Market Skeptic Republicans
- New Era Enterprisers
- Bystanders
- Devout and Diverse
- Disaffected Democrats

- Opportunity Democrats
- Solid Liberals.

By digging into these categories, we can find support for action on climate change among conservatives in a more targeted way. This support is most heavily concentrated among New Era Enterprisers and Market Skeptic Republicans, with a majority of both categories indicating support for stricter environmental laws. Importantly, support for stricter environmental laws did not correlate strongly with belief, indicating that belief questions may not be helpful in identifying conservative support for climate action.

Fifty-one percent of New Era Enterprisers and 41 percent of Market Skeptic Republicans say that protecting the environment is so important to them that they do things in their own lives to help the environment. Sixty percent of New Era Enterprisers and 57 percent of Market Skeptic Republicans say that stricter environmental laws are worth the cost. Yet, only 36 percent of New Era Enterprisers and 41 percent of Market Skeptic Republicans say that the Earth is getting warmer because of human activity.

We see here, then, that a focus on solutions exposes more support than a focus on belief. Taken together with data on support for solutions from the Yale study discussed above (see Figure 6),[36] which demonstrates that a plurality of voters support action on climate change, the path to identifying those conservatives who may support action on climate change within that voter group becomes more clear. By looking at Pew's subgroups, we see that conservatives are not a monolithic group, and looking at them as such obscures key pockets of support. The Yale report on global warming also illuminates a key gap between support and action—and the need for more research on the subject.[37] Only 6 percent of registered Republican voters reported that they had urged an elected official to take action on global warming in the last 12 months.



Source: Graphic courtesy of the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and George Mason University's report, "Politics & Global Warming" (2018).

Further research is required, then, to understand more about conservative subgroups and which methods and messages might move them to action.

Opportunities for Further Research

No one entity or organization has organized the vast amount of data that exists through the lens of getting a full and actionable picture of conservative opinion on climate change. Our initial goal was to present a month-by-month analysis of trends in conservative public opinion on climate change for the 15-month period between October 2016 and January 2018. This exercise proved impossible based on several gaps in the research.

Creating consistent and actionable data could have a significant impact on the ability of stakeholders to approach conservatives strategically on climate change. In undertaking an investment to fill this research gap, the following areas should be prioritized:

- Identify an owner for a longitudinal study that clearly defines the term "conservative," uses it consistently, and uses a consistent solutions-

focused set of questions at regular intervals. Within that, identify and consistently define and break out conservative subgroups. Frequent inquiry into a standardized set of solutions-based questions should be tied to a standardized set of subgroups.

- Conduct more research that includes behavioral measures (e.g., randomized, controlled experiments to validate polling results on belief with observations on how it actually impacts one's behavior).

- Ensure that the above two steps include both a broad overview of the electorate and large enough samples of working-class white voters and other key demographics that have been traditionally left out of current polling.

- Develop a "persuadable climate conservative" model. Within that, identify conservative characteristics that aggregate to persuadability on climate and allow the user to identify various types of climate conservatives (e.g., conservation voter). Develop a set of micro-targeting models focused on characteristics of conservation climate action voters (e.g., education, religiosity).

The existing data indicate that there is a path forward for organizing conservative support for bipartisan solutions to climate change. However, new research must be conducted in order to define and target conservative subgroups more clearly. We already know that there is significant support for climate change solutions—particularly renewable energy—among key conservative subgroups. The data indicate that, with the right strategy and resources in this reform sector, there exists a great deal of potential for connecting to conservative voters.

Section 3: Corporate Climate Leaders

Key Takeaways

- Efforts to engage conservatives on climate change policy reform typically assume a leading role for business and corporate leaders. A cross-partisan model of environmental-business engagement held sway for decades on other issues. However, companies have been less willing to provide leadership on climate policy.

- Changing consumer attitudes are a major driving force behind corporate action on climate change—and will continue to be in the future. This trend is additionally supported by the historical, and increasingly large, role corporations see themselves playing in making an impact in the communities in which their employees live and work.

The environmental community has spent years engaging powerful business leaders as a means to broaden the dialogue about climate change and develop new and innovative ways to solve our country's—and our world's—challenges when it comes to reducing greenhouse gases, eliminating waste, and developing green energy. The World Resources Institute (WRI), for example, established its Corporate Consultative Group,[38] which boasts members including General Motors, Best Buy, Walmart, PepsiCo, and the Walt Disney Company. The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) has its EDF+Business division,[39] which has partnerships with AT&T, McDonalds, KKR, and Starbucks. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has its Climate Savers,[40] which include Johnson&Johnson, Sony, Volvo, and the Coca-Cola Company.

These partnership programs and leadership councils have certainly yielded positive impacts. Several case studies show how companies across a multitude of industries have reduced waste, cut water usage, slashed carbon emissions, and doubled down on their commitment to clean energy sources. For example, in 2016, WRI helped Mars, Incorporated develop a set of evidence-based targets for its billion-dollar "Sustainable in a Generation" plan,[41] which outlined goals for the company's carbon emissions, as well its as land and water use. Similarly, from 2012 to 2015, EDF worked with AT&T to identify ways to reduce water usage at the company's cooling towers by 150 million gallons per year.

Market forces and changing consumer attitudes are almost certainly the driving force behind corporations' increasing focus on green initiatives and environmental impact.[42] A November 2016 paper in the International Journal of Communication titled "The Consumer as Climate Activist"[43] found that nearly one-third of Americans said they "rewarded" companies they viewed as active on

climate change, while roughly 20 percent said they had "punished" companies that opposed action on climate change. As the international conversation about climate change develops in the coming years, and consumers' and shareholders' appetite for environmentally responsible brands continues to grow, these initiatives are only slated to increase in number, frequency, and scale.

These initiatives mark important progress for a number of industries, and a more educated and climate-savvy corporate class is an integral part of making major progress as it relates to climate change. However, until now, no one has truly been able to rally the business community at large around state or federal policy reform as it relates to climate change and environmental protection, with the sole exception being the clean energy industry, which has an obvious business interest in doing so.

Engaging with environmental groups on these projects is an easy way to achieve specific business sustainability goals and cultivate goodwill among consumers. Moreover, from a business perspective, it's a much more low-stakes strategy than lobbying Congress or the administration to pass major regulatory or political reform. This fact isn't lost on pro-climate lawmakers—as U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D- R.I.) said: "One of the dirty secrets that we have to live with is that even the good-guy corporations don't show up in Congress to lobby for doing something about climate change. Collectively, they do zero or less than zero to support climate legislation... That leaves the field to the bad guys."[44]

Engaging Business as Part of a Cross-Partisan Political Strategy

When any discussion arises about engaging conservatives on climate change policy reform, one of the first assertions is that businesses and corporate leaders will be an imperative part of the equation. Most would agree that business engagement and an eye toward market-based solutions is part of any sound conservative political strategy.

However, today's political climate is unlike any we've seen in recent decades, and traditional political strategies won't necessarily work under the current administration. Indeed, it will seem challenging to find corporations and CEOs who are willing to openly advocate for this issue when the president has made it clear that anyone who disagrees with him is at risk of becoming a target for public attack.

Many of the "good-guy" companies that are most vocal about climate change progress don't necessarily "walk the walk" when it comes to supporting environmentally friendly policies. For example, in 2015, Amazon came under fire for its refusal to publicly release energy consumption figures at its data centers, as well as for a very late switch to alternative energy sources.[45] This came shortly before the company joined a new White House initiative on climate change.[46]

Similarly, Nestle—which voiced its opposition to a Trump executive order rolling back parts of the Clean Power Plan—received criticism for its controversial water-sourcing practices and legal battles against those who oppose them.[47]

This has traditionally been viewed as a major challenge for advocates wishing to engage corporate voices in the fight for political progress on climate change: differentiating the earnest and committed from the multitude of voices vying for a "cheap and easy public-relations victory."[48]

It is telling that despite the widespread response from CEOs after the withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement,[49] there was relative silence from pro-climate businesses when the Administration rolled back the Clean Power Plan in October of 2017[50]—considered by many to be a much more harmful move toward reversing climate change policy successes.

Bill Shireman, author of *Engaging Outraged Stakeholders*, poses a counter-argument to the assumption that corporate actors are driven only by the desire to make more profit. From his perspective, there are many compelling reasons for corporations to proactively engage on issues like climate change. It improves brand reputation, drives employee engagement and retention, preempts government regulation, and positions the company as a leader among competitors. In addition, he argues that all corporations exist for a purpose—to solve a problem, to fill a need, or to improve life for consumers—and that the profit the company generates is the engine by which that purpose is fulfilled. Shireman leans on the words of the late David Packard, co-founder of Hewlett-Packard, to illustrate this point:

> "Many assume, wrongly, that a company exists solely to make money... the real reason HP exists is to make a contribution...to improve the welfare of humanity...to advance the frontiers of science...Profit is not the proper end and aim of management—it is what makes all of the proper ends and aims possible."[51]

Shireman sees his experience partnering with Coors to achieve statewide recycling, after repeated failures, as a model for common ground between the cause-driven left and the corporate sector. These are some considerations to bear in mind:

- Work must be done to build constructive, trusting relationships between businesses and advocates, and to foster honest conversations about everyone's goals.

- The narrative that corporations and their leaders will do anything to maximize profit, regardless of the social costs, is unhelpful.

- Changing consumer attitudes are a major driving force behind corporate action on climate change—and will continue to be in the future.

Many more Americans (21 percent) said they had withheld business from companies they saw as opponents to climate progress than had contacted government officials about climate change (8 percent).[52] And these behaviors have proven effective. Consumer activism is responsible for a number of major changes in the way major global companies do business. In February 2018, Unilever announced it would make public its entire palm oil supply chain after years of calls from consumer groups and environmental activists for greater transparency over concerns about deforestation and human rights violations.[53] And Nike famously embarked on a multi-year effort to monitor and correct inhumane work conditions at its factories and in its supply chain after criticism and protests from labor activists and student groups.[54]

Corporations that want to be seen as leaders and innovators can choose to take this cue early on—to adopt policies that help reduce their carbon footprint and positively impact the environment on their own. And they will reap the benefits from climate-conscious consumers. But even those who lag on climate change will ultimately have to make changes due to the evolution of the market and consumer demand.

As consumer attitudes change, we can anticipate that these efforts will increase in their breadth and depth among leading corporations with the desire to have a positive social impact. For those more resistant to change, it can be expected that a global market, in the context of more climate-progressive policies in other countries, will eventually force them to either adapt or lose market share. Whether or not American federal policy keeps up with these changes will matter less and less as consumer demand fundamentally changes.

Section 4: State and Local Progress on Climate Change

Key Takeaways

- States are increasingly taking active leadership on the issue of climate change. Importantly, this progress has not slowed since the 2016 elections, with states increasingly experimenting with policies designed to curb emissions and provide incentives for new technologies to flourish.

- Nevertheless, state- and local-level organizations are having trouble replicating their success, as the strategies necessary for policy change vary state by state. Successful organizing for impact must be cross-partisan, and to date those efforts have not been built for scale.

- Three key areas that will need investment to successfully power a replicable model for climate policy movement include a power analysis of state-level dynamics, medium-term trust and relationship-building, and an improvement of the quality and depth of state-level data.

Climate change is an issue that exhibits many of the key characteristics of a classic tragedy of the commons; a warming planet respects no geographic boundaries. Accordingly, much of the attention in the climate change debate has focused on international or federal response to the issue. However, as the Trump administration retreats from leadership on climate change, there is rising interest in state and local investment. This section takes a deeper look at the response from state and local governments, and offers a framework for thinking about state-level investments given learnings about how climate and clean energy advocates are organized within separate partisan frameworks.

State-level efforts assume a larger role in thinking about right-of-center climate advocacy than has often been the case in climate community strategizing for three reasons. First, states offer a smaller—and sometimes less politicized—arena in which to try working through the divergent ways the left and right frame climate and advocacy. Second, important right-of-center constituencies are more open to action at the state level. Although right-of-center funders to date have emphasized federal solutions, major activity is already happening locally—supported by both conservative and mainstream climate funders and springing up organically. Third, the states are where future climate leadership emerges—through individuals who make their way from state into national politics, and because decades of experience in cross-partisan coalition building suggests that the most effective coalitions are formed and trust forged at the state level first.

What's happening at the sub-federal level?

States are increasingly taking active leadership on the issue of climate change. Despite the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, 23 states in the U.S. Climate Alliance have pledged to work towards meeting the Paris targets, even after President Trump disavowed it. These states are taking explicit steps to signal to the international community that the United States has not given up, and that it can be counted on to re-engage under different leadership at the federal level. At the 2017 Bonn Climate Conference for the Paris Agreement, the governments of Canada and Mexico joined with the Climate Alliance to create a "Leadership Dialogue" that observers described as a "quasi-supranational platform with which the EU" and other nations can engage as if it were a party to the agreement.[55] Nevertheless, one study by Climate Interactive found that if all state and local commitments are met, the resulting reductions in greenhouse gases would cover only 20 to 36 percent of the original U.S. commitment.[56]

Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis famously called the states "laboratories of democracy," and they are certainly testing grounds for a wide range of policies to respond to climate change. Utah Republicans put through a resolution exploring carbon sequestration on rangelands as a "win/win" alternative to the "major dislocation" they foresaw from federal climate programs; former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie signed into law a Democrat-led bill promoting biofuels.

Importantly, the pace of state-level activity has not slackened since the 2016 elections. The 2018 elections ushered in a burst of partisan action in Colorado, New Jersey, and a number of states, but the momentum had never stopped. Almost exactly a month later, former Governor Bruce Rauner (R-Ill.) signed the bipartisan Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA, Public Act 099-0906)[57] intended to make the state a clean energy leader. The National Resources Defense Council—which joined the Sierra Club, Environmental Defense Fund, Citizens Utility Board, and local leaders in support of the legislation—called the bill "the most significant piece of climate and clean energy policy in the state's history."[58] Republican House Minority Leader Jim Durkin said it was key to creating a "diverse and reliable energy portfolio."[59] And Democratic Representative Robyn Gabel said it was the legislature's "most important green energy bill."[60] The bill represents one model of coalition-building in that it contained a little something for many constituencies left and right: solar rebates and a net metering cap, support for struggling nuclear power plants, incentives for clean energy investment, job training, and resources for low-income communities.

Nevada's "Solar Bill of Rights" came about through a different model driven by a partnership between libertarians and environmentalists. Florida Tea Party founder Debbie Dooley's Green Tea Coalition used anti-monopoly arguments to attack restrictions on solar power. Her efforts expanded to Georgia and then to

Nevada, where state utility regulators decreased the payment credit rate for rooftop solar panels, making the systems much more expensive.[61] The Bring Back Solar Alliance featured a wide range of organizations,[62] including the League of Women Voters, SolarCity, the National Wildlife Federation, Patagonia, and the Environmental Defense Fund along with groups like Green Tea, Conservatives for Energy Freedom, and the Evangelical Environmental Network. They won a 95 percent credit rate and a net metering system.

As the Green Tea Coalition model suggests, states also serve as proving grounds for modes of cooperation and for the building and testing of coalitions between groups that often find themselves ideologically opposed. State-level energy, activism, and coalition-building have been key elements of the success of other policy issues that have advanced with unusual cross-partisan coalitions at the federal level, such as criminal justice reform and education reform, among others. Those coalitions took years of trust-building and policy work at the state level to develop. For example, analysts date the beginnings of the recent wave of criminal justice reforms to Texas in the mid-2000s,[63] although it was noticed at the national level only after 2010 and sweeping federal legislation based on state initiatives was not introduced until 2015 (and has never passed).

Because state-level work is slow and diffuse, the question of whether and how much to focus resources on fighting climate change at the state level prompts disagreement among climate advocates and funders. Some argue, as did one senior foundation executive we interviewed, that from the perspective of climate science, "we don't have enough time" for state-led progress. Others argue, however, that "states are absolutely the only venue where things are going to be happening."

This dilemma also exists but is less intense for right-of-center clean energy and climate advocates, both because small-government philosophies more naturally focus away from the federal level and because large-government-based policy solutions are seen as either less necessary or explicitly undesirable.

Of course, attempts to build coalitions across party lines at the state level are not new. Major environmental organizations have been working with conservative-leaning hunting and fishing enthusiasts for decades. Cross-partisan partnerships on solar energy access at the state and local level date back 10 years, while state-level efforts to build support for climate and clean energy policies among faith leaders across partisan lines began as early as 1998 with what is now Interfaith Power and Light.

Efforts to expand or ramp up state-level efforts to take advantage of contemporary openings for cross-partisan coalition-building face three distinct challenges. The first challenge is understanding where funders and organized efforts are currently operative; the second is assessing the state of play across 50-plus highly diverse state lawmaking, regulatory, and political structures; the third

is forming a theory of change that accurately reflects how conservatives operate and the complexity of conservative politics (as well as the complexity of progressive politics) and the realities of cross-partisan coalition-building.

Understanding of where cross-partisan state climate advocacy is already underway, and who supports it, varies widely. Different climate coalitions and funders each have their own lists of priority states. As one climate community leader told us, "Climate Action has a campaign with state targets... the Energy Foundation has state targets... the People's Climate Movement has state targets." Different wings of the climate and energy efficiency movement may or may not know which states others are targeting, whether their strategies in those states are cross-partisan or not, and who is in or out of coalitions. Because organizing can work at cross-purposes, and because local actors will be recruited to join competing coalitions with differing goals, information-sharing will be a key piece of efforts to build trust across ideological lines at the national level. As one progressive climate leader told us, "What we would want is transparency, so that our members working locally have some idea of what's coming..."

To date, state-level climate efforts have had significant limitations. An extensive review of legislative activity and communications in all 50 states since 2012 reveals several trends that state politics aficionados will already know. State legislatures are profoundly reactive. Climate is not a first-tier issue; "global warming" and "climate change" feature very little in legislators' public communications. A review of public communications from state legislators over eight years—including social media posts, press releases, and email newsletters—shows that they are often negative, featuring vitriolic rhetoric and dubious reference material. It is thus likely that public dialogue themed around climate makes Republican action on environmental issues more difficult. In contrast, discussions of renewable energy sources like wind[64] and solar power[65] are much more positive.

Avoiding the Pitfalls of State-Level Organizing

Given the increasing action at the state level, it is critical that we understand the diversity of the conservative environmental sector and its relationship to GOP politics at both the federal and state levels. When thinking about a state-based strategy, we identified a number of factors that might seem to be useful markers, but, because of the non-symmetry of the partisan divide, are either not useful or are not by themselves sufficient to develop strategy.

It is critical that we understand the diversity of the conservative environmental sector and its relationship to GOP politics.

Identity-Based Organizing

As noted earlier in the report, much cross-partisan outreach to date has been focused on association groups perceived to be closer to the GOP—veterans and evangelicals, in particular. However, the usefulness of this approach is completely dependent on whether those groups are perceived as central actors in a given state's politics—or in national politics. In Virginia or North Carolina, for example, large numbers of retirees and the outsized role of military installations in the state economy give military voices an influence in politics that they lack in Pennsylvania or New Hampshire.

Public Opinion

Local opinion around climate has limited value in choosing where to invest, for two reasons. First, as has been repeatedly demonstrated on issues from healthcare to taxes, elected officials are far less responsive to mass public opinion than to the activism of the most connected and concentrated voters. Second, public opinion is less differentiated by region than one might expect: majorities in most states now agree that climate change is happening, that humans play a major role in it, and that utility companies should use more renewable energy.

Estimated % of adults who think global warming is happening, 2018.

Statement	Average (Adults who Agree)	Range (Adults who Agree)
Global warming is happening	70%	18 (77% in Hawaii, 59% in West Virginia)
Global warming is caused mostly by human activities	57%	21 (64% agree in Hawaii, 43% in Wyoming)
Require utilities to produce 20% electricity from renewable sources	63%	21 (71% in Washington, D.C. and 50% in Wyoming)

In 2018, the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication's Climate Opinion Maps[66] found across states that an average of 70 percent of adults (77 percent in Hawaii, 59 percent in West Virginia) agree that global warming is happening. Belief that humans contribute to global warming averaged 57 percent with a range of 21 (64 percent in Hawaii, 43 percent in Wyoming). And an average 63 percent support requiring utility companies to generate 20 percent of their electricity with renewable energy. The range was at 21 percentage points between Washington, D.C. (71 percent) and Wyoming (50 percent). Public concern about climate, weather, and energy can be a significant motivator for state-level activity

when linked to pocketbook or quality-of-life issues for which voters hold state officials responsible. As one funder active with right-of-center groups commented, "We're seeing public opinion shifts affect governors in a way that's not showing up for federal-level electeds." But it's not public opinion on broad questions of climate that is driving state-level action.

Partisan Status

It is easy to make the assumption that "purple" states—where Democrats and Republicans are closely matched—offer the best prospects for progress. But that isn't necessarily the case. Policies favorable to renewable energy tend to cleave both the Republican and Democratic parties, as was discussed above. Experience on issues from criminal justice to education shows it is harder for intra-party policy disputes to play out in closely divided polities. A more reliable guide—though it demands a deeper political analysis—is looking at the relative strength of climate/energy advocates within their party. Specifically, this also requires a realistic assessment of the strength of the fossil fuel lobby in state politics.

Renewable Energy Production

High renewable energy production does not automatically produce a receptive environment for climate legislation. For example, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, a number of red states that don't participate in many other fields of climate work actually are some of the top producers of renewable energy. In spite of little to no climate progress in terms of state infrastructure, climate agreements, or legislation, Texas produced the third-largest amount of renewable energy, at 984.9 trillion BTU in 2015. Similarly, Alabama (686.4), South Carolina (676.2), and Georgia (622.1) ranked 8-10, respectively, while climate superstars Vermont and Hawaii produced only 83.4 and 24.9 trillion BTU of renewable energy in 2015, earning them 40th and 46th places. (Vermont and Hawaii have passed their own climate legislation and are signatories of regional and international climate agreements, including the Paris Agreement). The disconnect may come from red states' economic incentives, rather than environmental motivations, as clean energy can help lower utility costs, create jobs, and help farmers who put wind turbines on their land. Of course, these red states are also much larger, with more land to produce renewable energy. Both of these caveats, then, indicate that any "indicator factors" are not simple, and must include careful nuance.

Existing Regulatory/Incentive Structures

A structural lens turns up significant variance in state institutions, raising the question of whether states with stronger energy and environmental infrastructure are a natural "target" for climate and energy advocacy. However, often these have been created in response to specific federal mandates and funding. The number of states that have few or no departments for environmental issues is very small: only Wisconsin, Texas, Florida, Delaware,

and Arizona. None has seen successful climate legislation. While all of the states that see the most work on climate change issues do have such departments, so do many others, such as Mississippi, Georgia, and North Carolina. Therefore, while state institutional capacity may assist in some cases, it provides little guarantee of either successful or attempted legislation, perhaps because of the standard state-level focus on conservation rather than proactive work on climate change. As we discuss in the "research agenda" section below, it is not clear which state-level institutions and structures, if any, indicate a strong foundation for cross-partisan climate action.

Nor do renewable energy incentives alone predict climate-focused policies, even though the majority of Republican-supported climate legislation focuses on the renewable energy industry. While some "green" states like California (255), Washington (134), and Oregon (148) do provide among the highest number of programs, others like Vermont (49) and Hawaii (29) fall on the other end of the spectrum. Other middle-ground states that do work on climate issues, like Illinois (93), Missouri (79), and Pennsylvania (68), and non-climate states, including Kentucky (84), Texas (157), and Indiana (89), also offer many incentive programs.

Finally, joining a climate agreement is no guarantee of strong action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By no means are all of the 20 states that pledged to remain in the Paris Climate Agreement showing progress toward reducing emissions. Based on our legislative analysis, Delaware and North Carolina, for example, are relatively inactive. Rhode Island participates in 12 regional and national climate groupings but has taken little concrete action. On the other hand, Pennsylvania and New Jersey belong only to the 2010 Transportation and Climate Initiative but are very involved in pursuing renewable energy production and climate-focused state legislation, respectively, according to our analysis.

Confronted by this list of unhelpful factors and the scope and variation of the 50 United States, advocates and funders may feel tempted to turn back to the federal level. Yet with 20 states and 110 cities enacting reduction targets, and with the biggest growth in renewable energy happening in red states like Iowa and South Dakota,[68] it's clear that the scope for movement at the state level is vast. This is less clear at the federal level because of existing partisan gridlock and the likelihood that current districting patterns will keep both Houses of Congress closely divided, thus rendering partisan rancor high. Moreover, from decades of experience in other policy areas,[69] we know that effective cross-party initiatives at the federal level usually begin from years of work at the state and local level—and we know three factors that make cross-party state organizing most likely to succeed.

- Successful transpartisan organizing allows all sides to brand policy outcomes as consistent with core ideology, not a compromise from it.

- Like all organizing, successful transpartisan organizing puts relationships at the center.

- Successful cross-partisan organizing has long time horizons and can move flexibly to exploit opportunities as they arise.

Promoting Success: An Agenda for State-Driven Change

As major climate organizations assess existing investments in state-level policy advocacy, and right-of-center funders explore the state space as well, we recommend three major investments as a necessary backdrop: power analysis of state-level dynamics; patient relationship-building among constituencies, rather than rushing to legislative action; and improvement in data and best-practice sharing across states.

Power Analysis of State-Level Dynamics

Among the analyses that need to be made in developing state alliances is the relationship among utility companies, other energy interests, and partisan political elites in individual states. As was noted earlier, climate advocacy has often assumed that "business interest" equals "Republican power." In actuality, private sector interests are highly fragmented, and ideological alliances differ from state to state and even within states. In addition, commercial interests differ wildly in how savvy they are at engaging in state politics, how willing they are to do so, and where energy/climate issues land on their scale of priorities. Like national political leaders, local leaders know when a corporate effort has teeth and when it is for public affairs consumption only. There is simply no substitute for in-depth analysis of how political and economic interests intersect across the ideological spectrum. Advocacy needs to be tailored to understanding the role utility companies and extractive industries, for example, play in state politics—as well as the relative power and sophistication of interest groups such as veterans or clergy in any given state.

Medium-Term Trust and Relationship-Building

A constant that we heard from activists and funders across the political spectrum was that, even where they did not anticipate having common advocacy projects, they would like to better know others active in the energy/climate sector across ideological divides. National leaders expressed concern that funders might be engaging different sectors in the same state, possibly working at cross-purposes.

Analysts noted that past efforts to engage conservative voices on climate lost power because those new constituencies weren't in the brain trust of climate leadership. One Texas analyst described the role of "creation care" evangelicals

in the 2010 push for a national cap-and-trade plan: "Not only were evangelicals 'not at the table' for climate coalition decision-making, 'they weren't even at the kids' table.'"[70] Veteran transpartisan activists on issues from budgeting to criminal justice stress that allowing time to build trust and set clear boundaries is vital to success, and there are no shortcuts.[71] Over the long term, advocacy coalitions will be more successful when funders and coalitions are transparent about what work is going on and who is involved; and when potential partners are given time and space to build at least minimal levels of understanding and trust.

Improving the Quality and Depth of State-Level Data

Currently, energy/environment advocates and funders have no specific database or policy resource that would enable the field to have shared understandings of what is happening, and what works, at the state level. Legislative analysis for this study was based on Quorum, a database compilation of data from each state's public legislative website. Because of limitations in access to state legislative records, this study focused only on bills introduced after 2012. Future research should consider previous historical legislation, especially as a means of better providing context for present-day amendments, appropriations, and energy portfolio legislation. A future in which state-level efforts are central to climate progress will require much more robust data collection and analytical tools around state environmental legislation. We identified two particular questions for exploration:

- Are state-level financial incentive programs working to promote environmentally friendly behaviors? Legislative data show Republicans favoring financial incentives for environmentally friendly behavior. According to the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency (DSIRE),[72] 10 states offer more than 100 incentive programs (including federal), but they are not just limited to "super" climate states like California (255 programs) and Oregon (148). Texas offers 157 and North Carolina has 102. Are incentive programs producing results? Which ones?

- How do we share best practices? Without a seamless way to share best practices, when something does work in one , there is no guarantee that it will be replicated elsewhere—and even if something fails, it may well be replicated. As one funder commented to us, "We don't have the equivalent of ALEC to prepare model legislation." ALEC, of course, not only prepares but promotes model legislation, and it educates and connects state legislators around its issue positions.

Section 5: U.S. Landscape of Center-Right Organizations and Funders

Key Takeaways

- A useful way to understand conservative reform efforts is to analyze their approaches to mobilization. The Associations approach attempts to mobilize around a previously existing identity. The Libertarian approach focuses on appealing to limited government leanings of individuals on the right to advocate for reform. And arguably the strongest of the three approaches, the Innovation approach, focuses on investing in new science and technologies to address climate challenges.

- Key structural barriers in the sector include the intensely partisan atmosphere, a lack of strong organizations, and a dearth of strategic funders. Organizations such as ClearPath, which focus on the Innovation approach, are the strongest investments, while organizations organizing around the Associations approach are the weakest investments.

The conservative climate landscape features several prominent challenges. Advocates frequently find themselves in a defensive position to prevent movement backward, rather than proactively affecting policy. The universe of people willing to finance reform efforts is also relatively small. This lack of funding neuters the growth of talent and experience in the sector, especially as it contends with established interests. Whether approaching the sector as a funder or activist, a number of inherent challenges spring up:

- There is very little spirit of comity or collaboration around environment as a bipartisan issue.

- While there is an existing community of funders in the sector, most of the energy is on the left. Conservative funders are few and far between for this issue, and they do not collaborate by habit.

- There is little opportunity to scale existing efforts in the conservative environmental space.

- And, without question, this ranks among the riskiest of investments in political reform. Financing for reform on the left inspires an equally vigorous response by opponents on the right. Further, the ingrained lack of trust between the right and the left reduces the ability of reformers and funders to find each other in this work.

In short, it's tough to win in this area even under the best of circumstances. It's made tougher by the fact that the soil on which we might consider building a reform movement is hard and getting harder under the Trump administration.

How Conservative Environmental Organizations View Each Other

Much of our effort analyzing the sector was spent understanding how organizations within the conservative environmental movement view one another. The framework we have found most useful in breaking down the sector is one provided to us by one of the leaders in the field. Many of these organizations are small and relatively weak; they struggle to rise in a sector with little bipartisan spirit and a lack of steady financing. Based on this framework, organizations that focus on center-right climate change reform fall into one of three categories:

- **Associations Approach:** These are organizations that subscribe to a simple technique for spurring movement on climate change: They work to identify broad groups who are typically conservative and mobilize these individuals in a way that opens up space for policy opportunities. For example, they might focus on organizing veterans or Catholics around a piece of climate legislation. The Associations approach sees a common identity as an easy way to organize. For organizations and funders on the left focused on climate change, this has been a logical starting point in attempts to spur conservative momentum. However, this approach has inherent weaknesses. As we say in the polling review, climate change is generally not a priority issue for any of these Association groups. Similarly, this approach falters because these groups will often have an array of issues for which they advocate, preventing the level of focus necessary to build a sustained and powerful constituency.

- **Libertarian Approach:** Groups that fall under this category focus on appealing to the limited government leanings of individuals on the right to advocate for reform. For example, many of these organizations support market-based reforms that limit government regulation, such as carbon pricing. One challenge these organizations face, however, is the view that many are largely financed by major corporations in an attempt to advance their own agendas with little benefit to the American consumer.

- **Innovation Approach:** Arguably the strongest of the three approaches, the innovation approach focuses on investing in new science and technologies to address our climate challenges. These groups see themselves as removing ideology from the equation, looking solely at the inherent market opportunity in investing in new technologies and clean

energy. Many of these advocates are investors who got into the space because of the attractive investment opportunities it offered. Many advocate for wider use of nuclear power as clean energy, in addition to electric vehicles and the development of a grid, to support them. They take an entrepreneurial view towards climate change, understanding that innovation and new technology can help address this problem like any other business product or service.

Conservative Environmental Reform Organizations

ORGANIZATION	MISSIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS	APPROACH
ClearPath	Energy drives everything that we do, and for the longest time, the left has owned that debate. It's time for us to take that back. It's time for a conservative, clean energy agenda. At ClearPath we believe in America's entrepreneurial spirit. One that builds new technologies, not just for America, but for the whole world. We need a real debate that leads to real solutions. We need fewer top-down government policies and more focus on working with free markets rather than against them.	Innovations
Climate Leadership Council	The Climate Leadership Council is an international policy institute founded in collaboration with a who's who of business, opinion, and environmental leaders to promote a carbon dividends framework as the most cost-effective, equitable, and politically viable climate solution.	Libertarian
DEPLOY/US	DEPLOY/US is a strictly non-partisan organization dedicated to national action on climate and clean energy.	Associations
Future 500	To engage and align diverse stakeholders in support of systemic solutions to urgent global problems. Future 500 fosters the capacity for corporations and NGOs to engage one another in unique and meaningful ways.	Associations

ORGANIZATION	MISSIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS	APPROACH
R Street	The R Street Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, public policy research organization (“think tank”). Our mission is to engage in policy research and outreach to promote free markets and limited, effective government.	Libertarian
Center for Climate and Security	The Center for Climate and Security (CCS) is a non-partisan institute of the Council on Strategic Risks with a team and distinguished Advisory Board of security and military experts. CCS envisions a climate- resilient world which recognizes that climate threats to security are significant and unprecedented,and acts to address those threats in a manner that is commensurate to their scale, consequence, and probability.	Associations Libertarian
RepublicEN	We are over 7,000 Americans educating the country about free-enterprise solutions to climate change. Members of RepublicEN are conservatives, libertarians, and pragmatists of diverse political opinion. We stand together because we believe in American free enterprise. We believe that with a true level playing field, free enterprise can deliver the innovation to solve climate change. But America’s climate policy needs to change. Change requires that conservative leaders step up and lead.	Associations
Catholic Climate Covenant	Catholic Climate Covenant inspires and equips people and institutions to care for creation and care for the poor. Through our 16 national partners, we guide the U.S. Church’s response to climate change by educating, giving public witness, and offering resources.	Associations

ORGANIZATION	MISSIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS	APPROACH
ConvervAmerica	ConservAmerica began as a partisan effort in 1995 – today, we are a non-partisan national organization that creates new solutions to environmental issues that have become gridlocked by partisanship. Our mission is to educate the public and elected officials on constructive approaches to today's environmental, energy, and conservation challenges.	Libertarian
Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship	To safeguard the air, water, land, wildlife, and natural systems that sustain and enhance life on earth by promoting responsible stewardship and conservation, empowering fellow conservatives, and advancing the original conservative philosophy that compels us to be good stewards of our natural heritage.	Libertarian
Free the People	Free the People's goal is to get ahead of politics and engage in the cultural exchange that will set the political agenda for the next 50 years. We want to set the conversation, instead of settling for rhetorical scraps tossed to us by the political class. We want to make the community for liberty a cool thing. Using cutting-edge technology and storytelling, we're building a grassroots constituency that can translate good ideas into education, conversation, and social activism. This community influences culture and public opinion and drives boots-on-the-ground social change from the bottom up.	Associations

ORGANIZATION	MISSIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS	APPROACH
Young Conservatives for Energy Reform	Our mission is to: represent the young conservatives' point-of-view on energy reform before local councils, state legislatures, and Congress; speak out in the public arena and in the media on behalf of energy reform; train young conservatives to be effective leaders for energy reform action; educate young conservative voters about energy issues and legislators; and build an energy platform that speaks to the values of independence, security, prosperity, family, and stewardship.	Associations

Funders in the Sector

There are only two significant Republican funders in the sector: Jay Faison and Trammell Crow. This community is not growing, which has led to a significant and steady deficit in funding. Given this macro-funding environment, there is little hope that there will be a change in the funder community.

As we can see above, there are certainly organizations who have the potential to have impact on this issue. However, the fundamental distrust that exists in our current political environment will hinder any progress on the issue. Funders and activists on the right, despite their good intentions, will have deep concerns about receiving funding from, or collaborating with, organizations on the left. Intense media identification of climate and energy policy with the left's "Green New Deal" is likely to make this challenge bigger.

Similarly, some organizations on the left are moving away from collaborating across party lines, as many see working with the right as betraying core values. Reformers are faced with two unattractive options: reaching across the aisle only to be categorized as a know-nothing sell out, or remaining pure to conservative roots but lacking the resources to make change.

The inherent challenges in bipartisan solutions in today's political climate lend more weight to the Innovation approach. Investing in innovation and research is relatively unpoliticized, allowing more room for policymakers to agree.

Section 6: Conclusion

At a macro-level, there is a dearth of funding in the environmental space, and accordingly, a relative lack of strong organizations providing strategic investment opportunities. Our interviews with key leaders across the sector echoed this sentiment. This is exacerbated by the deep lack of trust in our current political environment, leaving little room for the coalition-building necessary to advocate for sustainable climate solutions. President Trump is one of the most polarizing political figures in American history, generating deep distrust between the parties.

Nevertheless, our analysis does find areas of current and potential future progress. As the federal government has retreated from taking the lead on climate change, states and businesses have forged ahead, maintaining some of the momentum. Additionally, our analysis indicates that the Innovations approach of change provides a potential bipartisan pathway forward. Perhaps the most promising element in this sector is that polling data indicates that many conservatives are already interested in different elements of policy reform in this space.

However, we find that the current actors in the conservative environmental movement are not strong enough to make serious inroads at a national level. There is a shortage of funding in the space, and accordingly, a relative lack of strong organizations providing strategic investment opportunities. Simply put: The infrastructure does not currently exist for high-leverage opportunities to engage conservatives on this issue.

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