

## **GOP CANDIDATES TIPTOE PAST CLIMATE CHANGE**

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### **Body**

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Do you believe global warming is happening?

Do you believe global warming is caused mostly by human activities?

Are you concerned about global warming?

For more and more Americans, those are three very easy "yeses." For an overwhelming majority of **climate** scientists, those are very easy "yeses." It is taking a criminally long time - maybe too long - but there is a growing public acceptance that the planet is warming because of human activity, and that we're pressing the deadline on a problem that could be devastating to life on the planet.

Wouldn't you think that the people running for public office ought to at least bother to answer those questions?

Instead, candidate after candidate on your ballot right now refused to respond to questions about their beliefs on **climate change** and how the government should respond. Most of the same candidates simply ignored requests to participate in a forum on **climate change** earlier this month as well. You don't have to guess which party they come from.

A survey conducted by the Spokane chapter of the **climate** action group 350 asked the candidates for local, state and national office a series of questions about global warming, including whether they even accept it is happening.

Twelve of the 15 GOP candidates didn't answer.

This is the new mode of denialism, as outright denialism becomes less politically tenable. In place of yesterday's confident denialism, there is cowardly evasion. In place of yesterday's scoffing dismissal of the science, a cagey silence has descended. In place of yesterday's snowball-on-the-Senate-floor nonsense, there is the timid attempt to "yes, but" the issue.

That's what Cathy McMorris Rodgers does when she "yes, buts" whether **climate change** is driving explosive wildfires - yes, **climate change** is real, she says, but it's nothing more than a political talking point to suggest this real **climate change** is having a real impact on real forests.

350 Spokane is the local chapter of an international group focused on **climate change** and pressing for political action to halt new fossil fuel development and shift to completely renewable forms of energy. It's not the only group that sends out questionnaires to candidates, and not the only one whose respondents break down along ideological lines.

## GOP CANDIDATES TIPTOE PAST CLIMATE CHANGE

And these GOP dodgers are not the only candidates to dodge tricky questions. But the issue of global warming is not just any old question - and the action, or inaction, of politicians on that front will have serious, life-and-death consequences.

McMorris Rodgers did not answer 350 Spokane's survey, naturally. Neither did Loren Culp, the GOP's surrender candidate for governor. Neither did incumbent County Commissioners Josh Kerns and Mary Kuney, or incumbent legislators Bob McCaslin, Mike Padden, Mike Volz, Joel Kretz or Jenny Graham.

Of the local GOP slate, the only answers came from legislative candidates Rob Chase, a former county treasurer who has recently espoused an openness to the unhinged QAnon theories and believes COVID-19 is no worse than the flu; Bob Apple, a former city councilman whose views are similarly situated out of sight from the mainstream; and Laura Carder, a member of the John Birch Society.

Each asserted they did not believe global warming was mostly caused by human activity.

Give them credit for not hiding.

The political expedience behind the silence is obvious.

More and more Americans accept the reality of **climate change** and want the government to act. A Pew Research Center poll in April 2020 found that two-thirds of Americans think the government is not doing enough to combat **climate change**, and that around 62% of Americans think stricter environmental regulations to fight global warming would be worth the cost. The same percentage said they have seen the effects of **climate change** in their region.

That poll also found something else: while more and more people recognize the threat, it is an almost completely partisan divide.

The poll found that 89% of Democrats with high scientific knowledge - as gauged by an 11-point questionnaire - said human activity contributes a great deal to **climate change**, as compared to 41% of Democrats with low scientific knowledge.

But a mere 17% of Republicans with high science knowledge said humans were a major cause of global warming - a lower figure than those Republicans with little science knowledge.

Partisanship was a stronger force, for those respondents, than actual knowledge.

And yet, among millennial Republicans, the numbers who accept human-caused **climate change** and support government efforts to pursue alternative energy are higher.

In other words, more and more Americans accept the science, are appropriately concerned, and support government action to slow down the temperature rise. And more and more young Republicans have those views as well, in addition to other more moderate **climate** stances - views that sharply diverge from older party members.

Given those realities, and the looming **climate** threat, what is a GOP politician to do? Take a clear stand against the science? Double down on denial?

Of course not. The 350 Spokane survey gives us the answer: Tiptoe silently and evasively through the minefield.

## Notes

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