|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Metatag Type |  |
| Title | Was Trump’s Paris Exit Good Politics? |
| Source | FiveThirtyEight |
| Author(s) | Perry Bacon and Harry Enton |
| Published/Uploaded | 10:43 AM ET, Fri June 2, 2017 |
| URL | https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/was-trumps-paris-exit-good-politics/ |
| Total Images | 0 |
| Total Videos | 0 |
| Total Ext. Links | 34 |
| Total Items Comprising the Sample | 1 |
| Total Word Count | 525 |
| Contributor | PMQ |

**Was Trump’s Paris Exit Good Politics?**

## His base may like it, but the majority of Americans won’t.

By [Perry Bacon Jr.](https://fivethirtyeight.com/contributors/perry-bacon-jr/) and [Harry Enten](https://fivethirtyeight.com/contributors/harry-enten/)

Was President Trump’s decision to [withdraw](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/01/climate/trump-paris-climate-agreement.html?_r=0) the U.S. from the Paris agreement on climate change — which was condemned by [Democrats](https://twitter.com/ChrisMurphyCT/status/870358506972430336) and even by some former [senior Republican officials](http://www.paulsoninstitute.org/news/2017/06/01/statement-of-henry-m-paulson-jr-on-u-s-withdrawal-from-the-paris-accord/) and key [world leaders](https://twitter.com/NBCNightlyNews/status/870398652052897792) — at least good politics for him? Perhaps. The move could help Trump reinforce his support among GOP voters and elected officials. But even if that’s the case — and we’re not sure it is — pulling out of the Paris accords has limited upside: The best Trump can hope for is probably getting back to square one.

Trump faces huge political challenges before next year’s midterm elections. Most immediately, he is weathering a health care debate that has [pulled down his approval rating](https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/trump-approval-ratings/) and [shrunk his base](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/donald-trumps-base-is-shrinking/). The GOP is pushing [unpopular legislation](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trump-is-tempting-fate-on-health-care/) on an issue (health care) that most voters rate as [one of their](http://www.people-press.org/2017/01/24/after-seismic-political-shift-modest-changes-in-publics-policy-agenda/) [top concerns](http://www.gallup.com/poll/1675/most-important-problem.aspx). That’s a bad combination. Meanwhile, Trump is also dealing with the various scandals regarding his and his allies’ alleged ties to Russia and any improper activity they may have engaged in as a result, either during the 2016 campaign or afterward.

Some congressional Democrats are [already floating the idea](http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/12/politics/kfile-democrats-impeach-trump/index.html) of impeaching Trump, and the idea may be [gaining momentum with voters](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/31/trump-impeach-polling-238947). So given the numerous Russia investigations, Trump needs the support of Republicans on Capitol Hill to remain in office and to enact his agenda. He also needs the backing of the [apparatus of the Republican Party](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/some-of-the-gops-institutions-have-more-reason-to-be-loyal-to-trump-than-others/).

Polling from Gallup [further indicates](http://www.gallup.com/poll/206513/democrats-drive-rise-concern-global-warming.aspx?g_source=CATEGORY_CLIMATE_CHANGE&g_medium=topic&g_campaign=tiles) that 85 percent of Republicans don’t think that global warming will pose a serious threat in their lifetime. And the [members of Congress](https://www.inhofe.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/inhofe-leads-senators-in-letter-to-trump-calling-for-withdrawal-from-paris-climate-agreement) and [other parts of the GOP coalition](http://heritageaction.com/sentinel-professionals/the-pathway-out-of-paris/) who took a public stand on the Paris agreement were largely against it. So this was the safe route for Trump — one that made his key political allies happy.

Those in favor of the Paris Agreement [correctly](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/04/25/climate/todays-energy-jobs-are-in-solar-not-coal.html) argue that “clean energy” jobs are growing, and that the coal industry is in decline, so an economic case can be made for staying in this agreement.

That’s the optimistic scenario for Trump — pulling out of Paris helps him rally the GOP behind him and changes the subject from Russia and health care. But there’s another way this could all play out.

An overwhelming majority of Democrats (87 percent) and a clear majority of independents (61 percent) wanted the U.S. to stay in the climate agreement, according to a poll that was released in April and [conducted jointly](http://www.politico.com/story/2017/04/26/polling-finds-majorities-oppose-epa-cuts-paris-pullout-237650) by Politico and Harvard’s School of Public Health. Overall, 62 percent of Americans wanted the U.S. to remain part of the accord (among Republicans, 56 percent favored withdrawal). A [survey](http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/paris_agreement_by_state/) by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication concluded that a majority of Americans in every state wanted the U.S. to remain in the Paris agreement.

So in the simplest terms, Trump’s move was broadly unpopular. All else being equal, that tends to be bad politics.

As we wrote earlier, if Trump’s voters view the Paris withdrawal as an *economic* move, he’ll likely reap some political benefit from it. If, however, it’s viewed as mostly having to do with climate change, perhaps Trump won’t see much gain with his base.