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**EDITED BY
HAYDEN LUDWIG**

RISE OF THE ECO-RIGHT



CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER
AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
MEET THE ECO-RIGHT	4
CITIZENS' CLIMATE LOBBY	12
CLIMATE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL AND AMERICANS FOR CARBON DIVIDENDS	17
THE NISKANEN CENTER.....	26
CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBLE ENERGY SOLUTIONS.....	33
REPUBLICEN.....	38
AMERICAN CONSERVATION COALITION.....	42
THE CLEARPATH NETWORK.....	48
YOUNG CONSERVATIVES FOR CARBON DIVIDENDS AND YOUNG CONSERVATIVES FOR ENERGY REFORM	52
THE NATURE CONSERVANCY	54
OTHER ECO-RIGHT GROUPS	58
APPENDIX	61

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If old sayings are anything to go by, then a conservative is as a conservative does. One hopes that that is particularly true of political groups responsible for shaping public policy—but what about groups that are funded by liberal donors to push their left-wing agenda?

This is the plight of the “eco-Right,” our name for the few dozen lobbying, litigation, and activist nonprofits that identify themselves as free market or broadly right-of-center and yet are attempting to rebrand environmentalism and global warming ideology as conservative values. In the process, they are threatening to undermine both affordable energy in America and the future of the conservative movement.

The Capital Research Center broke the news on the liberal mega-donors secretly bankrolling leading members of the eco-Right as well as the carbon taxes and other burdensome regulations they propose. In this report, we’ve compiled years of research and reporting to reveal the funders, leadership, and lobbying of the eco-Right, exposing a web of overlapping boards and shared donors—all in service to a destructive and misleading agenda.

Our aim is to equip the reader with the basic tools to understand these groups and their goals so that no one is fooled into believing that consensus-

driven science and alarmism are conservative values, however they’re presented.

We are not the “gatekeepers of conservatism.” Individuals are always free to identify themselves with whatever set of beliefs they wish. But as leading experts on the professional environmental movement, we’re all too familiar with the Left’s practiced use of deception and misdirection to camouflage its agenda to the casual glance. We understand that environmentalism—not conservationism—is and always will be a creature of the Left, a political cudgel for reshaping America in its own image and aborting freedom wherever it is found. Since 1984 we have been “following the money” from wealthy special interests to wherever it leads, liberal or otherwise. Few organizations have a deeper understanding of how thoroughly funders such as the Energy Foundation or the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation have saturated activist groups with multi-million-dollar grants, whether they call themselves “progressive,” conservative, or moderate.

Finally, although we are skeptical of human-induced catastrophic climate change, our focus is on the eco-Right’s funders and policies, not its motives. We provide basic arguments against carbon taxes to help readers better understand the battlefield. This report leaves persuading individuals of the issue of global warming to others.



“Eco-Right” is our name for the few dozen lobbying, litigation, and activist nonprofits that identify themselves as free market or broadly right-of-center and yet are attempting to rebrand environmentalism and global warming ideology as conservative values.

MEET THE ECO-RIGHT

Are conservative groups that push the Left's policies with the Left's funding *really* conservative?

Meet the eco-Right: so-called conservatives who support the Left's position on catastrophic manmade global warming, often with huge grants from liberal mega-donors. They *aren't* the Left—eco-Right groups proclaim the principles of free markets, limited government, and individual liberty—but they also promote a destructive agenda of consensus-driven science, statist policies, and cronyism that has much more in common with the radicals at the Sierra Club and Greenpeace than conservatism.

It is also important to distinguish between *conservationism* and *environmentalism*. Conservationism is about preserving clean air and water and exercising wise stewardship of natural resources—things championed by conservatives for generations. It couldn't be more different from environmentalism, an ideology that demonizes human life as a threat to the Earth.

Environmentalism is and always has been a creation of the Left, which is why its loudest supporters sound so much like socialists and other far-left militants. Its goal is increasing the government's power and extending its control to every part of life—from the way we travel to the electricity that powers our homes and the food we eat to how we think about our relationship to each other and the government as citizens. Nothing could be further from the pillars of individual liberty, free markets, and limited government cherished by conservatives.

That extends to science, too. Consensus isn't the goal of science; science seeks to explain the world around us through rigorous observation and experimentation. We still celebrate the courage of Galileo Galilei and Nicolaus Copernicus, scientists

who stood up to the wrongheaded, dangerous “consensus” among the experts of their day, defying the majority's belief that the Earth (not the Sun) is the center of the solar system. Those experts were dead wrong.

Environmentalism will always be about politics. A degree in biochemistry is not necessary to see that the Left's demonization of carbon dioxide (CO₂) as a “pollutant”—a naturally occurring gas essential to life on Earth—has nothing to do with protecting the environment. These extremists aim to destroy knowledge while pretending to be its caretakers.



The Left's global warming crisis is just its latest bid to reshape America in a single blow, destroying everything non-leftists hold dear in the process.

So why does this matter? Many liberty-loving conservatives and libertarians have been duped by the Left's lies. They aren't radicals, nor do they support extreme

policies like the Green New Deal, but they've been fooled into thinking they can compromise with leftists in order to save the planet from catastrophic climate change.

But there's no compromising with the increasingly radical Left because it is driven by an irresistible lust for power, not principles that conservatives would support. Eco-activists' chants of “keep oil in the ground” reveal a superstitious contempt for human life and prosperity, not a serious interest in good public policy.

There's no better way to rob Americans of their constitutional rights than by scaring them into surrendering those freedoms. Hence, the constantly shifting terms: from “global warming” to “climate change” to “climate crisis” to “climate emergency” to “climate weirding.”

What should be clear to the eco-Right is that conservatives can never offer a deal short of unconditional surrender that would please the Left.

The Left's global warming crisis is just its latest bid to reshape America in a single blow, destroying everything non-leftists hold dear in the process.

This paper seeks to inform about the organizations, lobbyists, and political activists that make up the eco-Right, tracing their objectives and funding—funding that often leads back to major liberal donors such as George Soros and the Hewlett Foundation—to answer our original question: Is the eco-Right *really* conservative?

THE MYTH OF A CONSERVATIVE CARBON TAX

Of all policies supported by the eco-Right, perhaps none is so often touted as “pro-free market” as a carbon tax. “Green” conservatives generally treat these taxes as a less harmful alternative to more radical policies, like a cap-and-trade scheme or the Green New Deal's 100 percent renewable energy mandates. While not every eco-Right groups supports a carbon tax—some vigorously oppose them as un-conservative—it's easily the most far-reaching and extreme policy proposed by the eco-Right.

In 2009, riding a massive wave of support that catapulted Barack Obama into the White House and Democrats into a comfortable majority in Congress, liberals proposed a stunning environmentalist agenda. At the top of the agenda was cap-and-trade legislation ([H.R. 2454](#)), popularly called the Waxman-Markey bill. If enacted, the bill would have set strict, ever-shrinking national limits on total carbon dioxide emissions and established markets for companies to buy and sell emissions permits.¹ The cap-and-trade system, by President Obama's own admission, would have caused electricity rates to “necessarily skyrocket.”²

The Waxman-Markey bill passed the House of Representatives but failed in the Senate. In its wake, public debate over global warming has largely shifted to a supposedly less onerous policy: taxing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Since the failure of cap-and-trade, a number of congressional Democrats and Republicans have introduced carbon tax bills of their own: Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT) in 2013, Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) in 2014, Sen. Sanders in 2015, Rep. John Delaney (D-MD) in 2017, Reps. Carlos Curbelo (R-FL) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) in 2018, Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) in 2018, and Reps. Francis Rooney (R-FL) and Fitzpatrick in 2019.³

A “Conservative” Carbon Tax? The Baker-Shultz plan might be called the father of all conservative carbon tax schemes.

In a February 2017 op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, former Reagan administration officials James Baker and George P. Shultz—both venerable Republicans—called on President Donald Trump and the Republican-held Congress to enact a \$40 per ton, “revenue-neutral” carbon tax and dividend. Such a plan, they wrote, “could spur larger reductions in greenhouse gas emissions than all of President Obama's climate policies” while strengthening the economy, buttressing national security, and “shrinking the size of government” by eliminating the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) authority to regulate carbon emissions.⁴ By “Obama's climate policies” the pair meant the Clean Power Plan, a “green” Great Leap Forward that hinged on annihilating the coal industry and adopting 2015 Paris Climate Accords—policies that Trump and Pence vowed to end on the campaign trail.

But a carbon tax would be at least as destructive as Obama's climate agenda. As climate expert Rupert Darwall noted in *National Review*, “the Baker-Shultz carbon tax proposal is really about saving the Paris climate treaty.”⁵

To add credibility to their plan, Shultz and Baker hailed “conservative thinkers Martin Feldstein, Henry [Hank] Paulson Jr., Gregory Mankiw, Ted Halstead, Tom Stephenson and Rob Walton,” co-authors of a report entitled “The Conservative Case for Carbon Dividends.”⁶ The report was published by the Climate Leadership Council (CLC), an advocacy group based in Washington, DC, that debuted alongside the report in February 2017. The

report itself attempts to appeal to the “populism” of Trump supporters. Instead, it reads like a veiled attack on Trump supporters who “threaten the current policy consensus [which favors] liberalized trade and investment.”⁷

Since then, more right-leaning environmental organizations have emerged to support carbon taxes of varying rates, while others question the policy’s effectiveness and political viability. One thing remains certain: There is no agreement on what a “conservative” carbon tax looks like among mainstream conservative groups and the eco-Right.

It’s worth adding that left-wing Union of Concerned Scientists and the World Resources Institute supported the Baker-Shultz plan, hailing it as a “good starting point” for “cut[ting] emissions in line with the goals of the Paris agreement.”⁸ (Left-wing support for supposedly center-right policies is a common theme among the eco-Right organizations.)

But how does a carbon tax work? Has any country ever adopted a carbon tax, and what were the consequences?

WHAT IS A CARBON TAX AND DIVIDEND?

“If you want less of something, tax it.” Libertarian economist and Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman’s wisdom still rings true. Unfortunately, this axiom has been turned on its head to support a pro-tax, Big Government agenda favored by the Left.

A carbon tax would levy fees on businesses for every metric ton of carbon dioxide gas they emit, raise the tax each year at a rate following inflation, and wait for all emissions to eventually disappear . . . someday.

Many carbon tax supporters go a step further, using revenues from a tax on carbon emitters to replace other federal taxes on Americans, claiming it would reduce CO₂ emissions and “solve” climate issues without significantly raising the general tax burden. Thus, they’re often marketed as “revenue-neutral,”

since many such proposals involve shifting the country away from gas taxes on *consumers* toward taxes on *producers* in industry and agriculture. Carbon tax groups further promise to pay back that added expense in electricity bills and other cost-of-living hikes in the form of “carbon dividends”—checks paid to Americans by the government from the carbon tax revenues.

Regardless of how it’s framed, taxing Americans in order to pay them off is like robbing Peter to pay Peter. If liberals proposed such a policy, conservatives would denounce it as wealth redistribution.



Renewables won’t “save” the planet.

Carbon taxes are far from cheap. In 2013, liberal Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Sanders presented a carbon tax plan that would have cost the U.S. economy an estimated 400,000 jobs in just three years, cost the average family of four over \$1,000 per year in direct and indirect expenses, and raised electricity prices by 20 percent in 2017 alone.⁹ Analysis of similar proposals by the U.S. Energy Information Administration indicate that a carbon tax could lead to the loss of over 1 million jobs and create a \$1 trillion hit to the economy by 2030.¹⁰

As for the effect on the climate, the center-right Heritage Foundation found that, if the U.S. ceased *all* economic activity and cut carbon dioxide emissions to zero, it would lower global temperatures “by no more 0.2 degrees Celsius by 2100.”¹¹

Much of the massive cost emanating from a carbon tax comes from renewable energy mandates, since the goal of any carbon scheme is to gut oil, gas, and coal production and replace it with “clean” energy. Simply put, any plan to move the U.S. to a low-carbon footprint necessarily means shifting energy production away from carbon-based fuels like oil and natural gas to renewable energy sources like wind and solar or nuclear. That’s a serious problem

since scientists have yet to discover any energy source as cheap, safe, energy-dense, and portable as carbon fuels.

A 2019 study by Mark Mills at the free-market Manhattan Institute compared energy output produced by investing \$1 million worth of capital into one of three areas: solar panels, wind turbines, and natural gas wells. Over a 30-year period, Mills found that a \$1 million investment yielded *600 percent more* energy output from natural gas (300 million kWh) than either wind turbines (55 million kWh) or solar panels (40 million kWh).¹² In other words, after decades of federal subsidies and innovation, renewables are still nowhere near as cost-effective as traditional energy sources—and may never be.

A few more basic arguments against a carbon tax include:

1. Renewables won't "save" the planet.

Any energy policy should hinge on promoting energy availability—making it affordable and accessible to all Americans. Renewables just don't fit the bill.

Eco-Right groups generally embrace nuclear energy and dams as sources of abundant clean energy, with good reason. Both sources generate enormous volumes of energy without releasing greenhouse gases. Both sources are highly efficient, able to run 24 hours a day, seven days a week over many years. They're already in use across the country and around the world. In 2018, nuclear power provided 55 percent of America's "carbon-free electricity," according to the U.S. Department of Energy.¹³ Water-powered turbines in the Hoover Dam have powered major cities in California, Nevada, and Arizona since the 1939.¹⁴ About 75 percent of France's energy comes from nuclear power plants, one of the reasons that country is a major net exporter of energy.¹⁵

Surely, large countries like the United States should diversify their energy production with nuclear and hydropower where practical. And the U.S. already does: 8.6 percent of the energy used annually in the U.S. comes from 59 nuclear power

plants nationwide, and another 2.7 percent comes from hydropower.¹⁶

But many on the Left aren't interested in promoting nuclear power or damming rivers. When environmental liberals—many of them carbon tax advocates—sing the virtues of renewable energy sources, they usually mean wind and solar power, and nothing else. The environmental Left has a long-standing ideological opposition to nuclear power—an opposition birthed in the anti-war movement and encouraged by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. And many professional activist groups like the Sierra Club oppose hydropower because, they argue, "damming rivers permanently disrupts the balance of ecosystems."¹⁷ Any plan to build more dams will incur the wrath of the International Anti-Dam Movement, which fumes over the "corruption and arrogance of over-powerful and secretive corporations" that build them.¹⁸

That's the key message: There's no middle ground to win or compromise to make because any global warming plan proposed by the Left will turn on huge amounts of solar and wind power, *not* nuclear or hydroelectric energy. Conservatives cannot and should not compromise with that.

Call them "unreliables," not renewables, because wind and solar are too fickle to reliably power the electrical grid. Electrical grids require a continuous and uninterrupted supply of energy to function properly. Provided with anything less than constant electricity, they don't just operate less efficiently; they shut off, just like a computer or television.

If Americans got most or all of their energy from solar panels and windmills, it would present bigger problems than a changing climate. In Texas, for example, electricity prices skyrocketed from \$15 to as high as \$9,000—a 40,000 percent increase—during an August 2019 heatwave, leaving parts of the state on the verge of blackouts. The cause was reliance on wind turbines during a period of weak winds and high energy use, following the retirement of several coal plants.¹⁹ And the historic snowstorm that blanketed Texas in February 2021 was exacerbated by the state's increasing reliance on renewables, which froze over and left roughly 2 million people without power for days

or even weeks.²⁰ If Texas were *entirely* dependent on renewables to power its grid—with no gas or coal to back up these “unreliables”—the Lone Star state would have been left completely at Mother Nature’s mercy.

Wind turbines typically generate electricity at about 34 percent capacity, compared with 85 to 89 percent for conventional natural gas, coal, and nuclear power plants. And they produce electricity only when the wind is strong enough, so they rely on batteries to store it for later use.²¹ But the wind is anything but cooperative—some days it gusts, and others it’s still.

Similarly, solar panels are completely beholden to the local weather, time of day, season, and geographical location to function properly—in other words, the amount of sunlight they receive. Outside the American Southwest, much of the country is just too cloudy for solar panels to work effectively (a problem not faced by nuclear plants or gas- and coal-fired power plants).²²

Imagine trying to power the electrical grid with solar panels in Pennsylvania or Washington state during two or three *days* of snow or rain. As such, electrical grids supplied by wind and solar power need backup generators. Ironically, nearly all of them run on natural gas because it’s reliable.²³ Far from being the technology of the future, reliance on renewables is a recipe for regular rolling blackouts *a la* Cairo, Egypt, and the other underdeveloped or developing areas.

While battery technology has come a long way in recent decades, even today’s cutting-edge batteries are severely limited in how much power they can cheaply store. It costs less than \$1 per barrel to store oil or natural gas for a few months, and less for coal. However, storing the equivalent amount of energy over a few months in batteries costs roughly \$200.²⁴ Consequently, the country has an estimated *two months’* supply of coal, natural

gas, or oil on hand at any given time but barely *two hours* of electricity stored in all utility-scale batteries in the national electrical grid and 1 million electric cars on the roads.²⁵

Turbines and solar panels are also extremely resource-intensive to construct, requiring huge amounts of minerals and metals, most notably copper. Trying to power the country with them would have terrible effects on the landscape. For example, constructing a wind turbine uses some *800 pounds* of copper and 30,000 pounds of concrete in huge foundations reaching 15–20 feet into the ground.²⁶ Modern batteries depend on lithium and cobalt. Lithium is mined in poor nations in South America, and 60 percent of cobalt is mined in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country notorious for human rights abuses and awful mining conditions.²⁷

Extracting the minerals and metals needed to construct “green” technologies on the gigantic scale imagined by environmentalists would cause unthinkable damage to the environment and the lives of the destitute people mining them for the benefit of rich Westerners.

While environmentalists market renewables as cutting-edge technology, they’ve actually been around for generations. Solar power was invented in the mid-1800s. Wind power has been propelling sailing ships and powering windmills for some 5,500 years. By the turn of the 20th century, the governments and businesses that established the first electrical grids realized these technologies could not meet growing energy demand and turned instead to coal, oil, diesel fuel, and natural gas.²⁸

What’s more, renewables are expensive. A recent study estimated the total cost of subsidizing renewables in the U.K. at nearly \$90 billion (£70 billion) between 2017 and 2024, or \$165 (£129) per household per year.²⁹



A carbon tax is just that: a tax. No matter how the politicians slice it, taxpayers get stuck with the bill.

In the United States, roughly 30 percent of the cost of wind power production is subsidized by taxpayers. Since federal support began in 1992, taxpayers have spent \$100 billion underwriting wind power—yet the promise of cheap, self-sustaining wind power has not been achieved and is not on the horizon. In fact, wind power producers depend so much on government subsidies that in 2019 the “low-cost energy source of the future” they had to lobby Congress to extend subsidies.³⁰

The limited lifespan (20–25 years) of wind turbines compounds their enormous expense. Turbines typically lose 1.6 percent of their utilization rates each year, meaning they steadily lose value as energy producers until they need to be replaced. Replacement isn’t cheap: Official documents put the cost of replacing the 18 turbines in Chippewa County, Minnesota at \$7,385,822, or \$410,000 per turbine.³¹

2. A carbon tax is not revenue neutral—it’s a tax hike.

A carbon tax is just that: a tax. No matter how the politicians slice it, *taxpayers* get stuck with the bill.

In 2017, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberal Party enacted a carbon tax that substantially *raised* household energy prices. Far from being low cost or revenue neutral—implying everyday consumers would see little change in their energy bills—annual household energy prices in parts of Canada are expected to rise as much as \$1,120 to meet emissions requirements.³² Far from being a cost-effective policy for energy consumers, the nation’s carbon tax has thus far proven a huge tax increase on regular Canadians. As one financial expert put it, “carbon taxes were enacted on a false premise: that economists can design carbon taxes that lower emissions at the least possible cost while shielding the economy from the drag of an added tax.”³³

Before the carbon tax, Canadian energy prices were *already* high. A 2016 study by the Fraser Institute found that “almost one-tenth of Canadian households [put] 10 cents of every dollar towards electricity, natural gas, and other forms of energy” in 2013—four years before the creation of a



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announces Canadian federal government to increase carbon pricing by \$15 a tonne per year starting in 2023.

carbon tax. “Almost 16 percent of households earning \$27,000 or less, and almost 17 percent of households earning between \$27,000 and \$47,700, were in energy poverty,” overwhelmingly due to “growing electricity prices.”³⁴

Canada’s carbon tax took effect in 2018 and is set to reach \$50 per metric ton by 2022. It’s worth noting that the results are already so dire that the Trudeau government was forced to scale back taxable emissions on businesses in August 2018 to stop an exodus of capital investment from the country.³⁵ According to the *Wall Street Journal*, foreign direct investment in the country dropped a staggering 56 percent from 2013 to 2017, primarily due to new taxes and strict environmental regulations.

Instead, energy and manufacturing companies increasingly turned their attention to the United States, where tax cuts and deregulation under the Trump administration made Canada’s southern neighbor more appealing to investors and producers.³⁶ The Biden administration has already undermined this U.S. comparative advantage.

3. Carbon taxes create a dependency on a shrinking tax base.

There’s a key problem inherent in any carbon tax: creating dependency on a shrinking tax base. If

a tax on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions works as promised, the federal government will find fewer emissions to tax each year. The bottom line is that maintaining stable revenues year after year would require either massively raising the carbon tax or increasing the level of GHGs emitted each year.

This absurdity is compounded if the carbon tax replaces a national gas tax in order to make it “revenue-neutral.” The government would forfeit gas tax revenues, which are relatively stable, in favor of relying on a tax base the government hopes to *eliminate*. Consumers would almost certainly be stuck with an expensive carbon tax and a new gas tax in order to compensate for flagging revenues—surely not what carbon tax supporters advocate for when they call it “revenue-neutral.”

4. Carbon fuels America’s economy and defense.

A carbon tax would also raise the cost of nearly *every* product manufactured, packaged, transported, and sold in the United States.

Carbon-based fuels—gasoline, diesel fuel, coal, and natural gas—provided 80 percent of the energy Americans consumed in 2018, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Wind, solar, and biomass provided just 8.8 percent.³⁷ So a tax on carbon dioxide emitted from these fuels would target the energy driving 80 percent of the U.S. economy, effectively taxing use of every gas-fired stove, gallon of milk, television, airplane, and car, along with almost everything else.

A carbon tax could also generate a national security crisis since the Department of Defense (DOD) is the biggest single energy consumer in the country. While the DOD has taken steps to diversify its energy portfolio to include a small amount of renewables to power military installations, it still heavily depends on traditional energy forms. (Nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines are notable “green” exceptions.) In FY 2014, the DOD used 87.4 million barrels of petroleum-based fuel, almost 60 percent for the U.S. Air Force.³⁸ It’s worth noting that the DOD’s goal of producing or procuring at least 15 percent of its power from

renewables by FY 2018 applies to *installations*, not *operations*. About three-quarters of the DOD’s energy consumption is spent on military operations, its primary role.³⁹ America’s armed forces run on oil and gas (and nuclear), not sunlight and wind.

Forcing America to depend on unreliable renewables would not end the military’s dependence on oil and natural gas, merely redirect it to imported energy sources—making the country increasingly dependent on foreign, often hostile powers. Fortunately, national energy independence is within reach—thanks entirely to hydrocarbon fuels.

In 2016, the Republican-led Congress voted to lift the 40-year ban on oil exports as part of the annual spending bill signed into law by President Barack Obama. The ban was originally imposed to combat the destructive oil shortages of the 1970s, when the U.S. depended on oil imports from hostile dictatorships in the Middle East. In the first half of 2017, oil exports increased to an average of 900,000 barrels per day going to 27 countries.⁴⁰

In January 2019, the Energy Information Administration reported a dramatic upsurge in domestic oil production of 2.5 to 3 million barrels per day of output compared with 2018.⁴¹ In 2019, the agency predicted the U.S. would become a net energy exporter in 2020 “as a result of large increases in crude oil, natural gas, and natural gas plant liquids (NGPL) production coupled with slow growth in U.S. energy consumption.”⁴² That prediction has since come true, and the country appears poised to become the world’s largest energy exporter as well.⁴³

The incredible turnaround in American oil and gas production offers United States something only dreamed of by most other countries: a relatively free hand to determine our own course, unfettered by foreign influence over our economy and defense. A carbon tax would sacrifice our energy independence and undermine our *national* independence.

5. Carbon dioxide is not a pollutant.

Many on the environmental Left accept as an article of faith that carbon dioxide is a “pollutant.” But that’s silly. Carbon dioxide is a colorless, odorless



Despite the extreme rhetoric in the media and among activists, carbon dioxide in the air isn't dangerous to life.

gas discovered by scientists in the 17th century and essential to life on Earth. CO₂ occurs naturally in hot springs and geysers. When solid it forms dry ice, which is commonly used to preserve food and cheaply ship frozen products worldwide. We use the gas to carbonate soda, and yeast forms CO₂ as a byproduct of producing alcohol.

The EPA, which was given the authority to regulate carbon dioxide emissions in a landmark 2009 Supreme Court case, doesn't consider CO₂ itself a pollutant, only extreme concentrations of the gas. Even then, the agency considers the gas a "pollutant" only because of its supposed role in climate change, not for endangering public health.⁴⁴ CO₂ is nontoxic to humans at concentrations below tens of thousands of parts per million. For reference, the current carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere is just 400 parts per million. According to the center-right Cato Institute, "even worst-case projections by the end of the century only put the concentration at 800–1000ppm"—not even remotely close to toxic.⁴⁵

Despite the extreme rhetoric in the media and among activists, carbon dioxide in the air isn't dangerous to life. Quite the opposite—carbon is a common element and a building block of life. Life on Earth is carbon-based, and carbon in the form of carbon dioxide—one carbon atom bonded to two oxygen atoms—is essential to that life. The coal, oil, and natural gas we burn for fuel was first carbon dioxide gas in the atmosphere. That carbon dioxide was consumed by prehistoric plants, which in turn were transformed by heat and pressure under the Earth's surface over millions of years until they became today's fossil fuels.

Plant life relies on carbon dioxide in the air the way we need oxygen. As we all learned in grade

school, humans and animals breathe out CO₂, and plants breathe it in, releasing precious oxygen (O₂) as a byproduct. In fact, high concentrations of CO₂ are routinely used in greenhouses to speed up and improve plant growth with no thought to "poisoning" the workers inside the greenhouses.⁴⁶

For most of the history of life on Earth, CO₂ levels in the atmosphere were much higher than today. The prehistoric ancestors of modern plants are thought to have evolved hundreds of millions of years ago, when carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was as high as 5,000 parts per million—as much as 10 times higher than today. Compared with then, there's strong evidence that the Earth is currently in a carbon *drought*.⁴⁷ After all, the Earth's atmosphere in the last major Ice Age—a period of endless tundra, windswept forests, and unrivaled suffering among our early ancestors—was roughly 180 parts per million CO₂, or half of today's level, with much of the rest dissolved in the much-colder oceans.⁴⁸ If there were *no* carbon dioxide on Earth, it would be a dead planet.

But far from dying, satellites have observed what scientists call the "greening of the Earth." In 2016, a study in the journal *Nature Climate Change* reported that a quarter to half of the planet's vegetated land has shown significant "greening" since the 1980s largely *because* of rising carbon dioxide levels. "The greening," according to the study, "represents an increase in leaves on plants and trees equivalent in area to *two times* the continental United States" [emphasis added].⁴⁹

Why then do extreme environmentalists target carbon dioxide as a social evil? Dr. Richard Lindzen, MIT professor emeritus of atmospheric science, observes:

CO₂ for different people has different attractions. After all, what is it? It's not a pollutant, it's a product of every living creature's breathing, it's the product of all plant respiration, it is essential for plant life and photosynthesis, it's a product of all industrial burning, it's a product of driving—I mean, **if you ever wanted a leverage point to control everything from exhalation to driving, this would be a dream.** [emphasis added]⁵⁰

COMPARING CARBON TAXES WITH CAP-AND-TRADE

Carbon tax supporters often call their policies “market-friendly” to sell them to conservatives and libertarians. But big tax increases are only streamlined in contrast with a much more bureaucratic cap-and-trade system proposed by some on the Left. So what’s the difference?

Cap-and-trade is phony market economics at its worst. Under such a proposal, the U.S. would “cap” the amount of carbon dioxide emissions certain emitters (such as factories) are allowed to produce each year. This would be accomplished by selling a limited number of permits from the government to companies, with each permit allowing the holder to emit only so much carbon dioxide. Companies would then be free to buy and sell permits from

each other—the “trade” in “cap-and-trade”—but emitting any amount of carbon dioxide gases *over* those limits would incur heavy fines.

Every year, the government would shrink the pool of available permits, meaning the cost of buying them would eventually outweigh the cost of paying fines on emissions. Companies would then find ways to reduce costs by lowering carbon emissions and eventually ending them altogether. Or that was the plan, anyway.

Cap-and-trade systems are even more bureaucratic than carbon taxes, requiring the government to manage a vast permitting process while carbon taxes are primarily a tax. Yet both policies would create a huge financial burden and a coercive government intrusion on energy production.



“Cap-and-Trade” puts a “cap” on the amount of carbon dioxide emissions certain emitters (such as factories) are allowed to produce each year in the U.S.

CITIZENS’ CLIMATE LOBBY

Citizens’ Climate Lobby (CCL) is an environmental lobbying nonprofit managed and funded by liberals with an extensive “conservative outreach” agenda through key Republicans on its advisory board.

CCL was created in 2007 by real estate broker Marshall Saunders and is headquartered in Coronado, California, where he resides. Saunders, who remains the group’s president, reportedly

became environmental activist after watching *An Inconvenient Truth*, the controversial global warming documentary created in 2006 by former vice president and climate activist Al Gore.⁵¹

Saunders was one of approximately 1,000 people Gore tasked in 2007 to present his “Climate Reality” slideshow at various places nationwide, holding a series of talks organized by Gore after the

launch of the documentary.⁵² The presentations ultimately coalesced into Gore's advocacy group Climate Reality Project, which was initially funded with the proceeds from the documentary and the book by the same name.

In the presentation, Gore argued for a revenue-neutral carbon tax to solve the Earth's impending "climate crisis."⁵³ Saunders reportedly gave the presentation 43 times.⁵⁴ In later interviews, however, he claims he reportedly "realized that Gore's solution wasn't compatible with the problem" of global warming as he saw it, though how his own analysis differed from Gore's is unclear.⁵⁵

In 2007, Saunders created his own advocacy group, Citizens' Climate Lobby, to popularize climate change activism and push legislation through Congress. Besides lobbying, since 2009 the group has hosted an annual international conference in Washington, DC, intended to train participants in "how to communicate about climate change and climate solutions."⁵⁶

Part of the conference involves a lobbying day, when members lobbying members of Congress to support CCL's principal piece of legislation, the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act of 2019 ([H.R. 763](#)), which was introduced in January and failed to leave the House Subcommittee on Energy.⁵⁷ A version of the bill was reintroduced in April 2021 with 85 co-sponsors, all of them Democrats, to the group's chagrin.⁵⁸ Not surprisingly, CCL supports the Climate Solutions Caucus in Congress, a nominally bipartisan caucus, historically dominated by Democrats and liberal Republicans.

CCL is tied into the larger eco-Left as well. It is a member of the US-Climate Action Network (US-CAN), a major environmental coalition whose members were closely involved in organizing the 2017 People's Climate March.

Structurally, the organization is built around the Citizens' Climate Lobby, an IRS-designated 501(c)(4) lobbying nonprofit, with a much larger 501(c)(3) support arm—the Citizens' Climate Education Corporation—created in 2008 to bolster fundraising.



Al Gore shares his "Truth in 10" slideshow – arguing for a revenue-neutral carbon tax to solve the Earth's impending "climate crisis."

CCL also backs legislation extending tax credits to "green" industries. It was one of 20 organizations to endorse the Growing Renewable Energy and Efficiency Now Act (GREEN Act) of 2019 ([H.R. 7330](#), reintroduced as [H.R. 848](#)) introduced by Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA). The bill would have extended federal tax credits to renewable energy research, including funding for "environmental justice" academic programs.⁵⁹

While CCL stopped short of endorsing the far-left Green New Deal in early 2019—a resolution that included everything *but* a carbon tax—it hailed the extreme proposal as proof that "there is huge appetite among [the] American people, and growing appetite in Congress, for bold climate solutions," adding that CCL shares the bill's goal of ending fossil fuels.⁶⁰

CARBON TAX ADVOCACY AND GLOBAL WARMING LEGISLATION

Saunders has called climate change a threat "bigger than ISIS" and supports large-scale legislation to combat it.⁶¹

CCL's initial goal was to create a national cap-and-trade system.⁶² For instance, an archived version of the group's website from October 2008 shows a photograph of CCL members meeting with Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA) "to discuss cap-and-trade" legislation.⁶³ Congressional Democrats introduced a cap-and-trade bill, popularly known as Waxman-Markey ([H.R. 2454](#)), in May 2009.⁶⁴ According to Saunders, CCL lobbied in support of the cap-and-trade bill. After it failed to receive a vote in the U.S. Senate, the organization shifted support away from a cap-and-trade agenda toward a carbon tax.

"Somebody mentioned to me offsets, and I thought what are offsets?" Saunders explained in a 2015 interview. "Well, when that got explained to me, I immediately thought this is not going to work." Shortly thereafter, Saunders met with Carbon Tax Center director Charles Komanoff, who convinced him to support a carbon tax.⁶⁵

Like nearly every pro-carbon tax group, CCL argues for a "carbon dividend" policy to supplement its carbon tax, which it says "is the key to offsetting [the tax's] cost increases" to consumers.⁶⁶ Saunders is candid about a carbon tax's effect on consumer prices:⁶⁷

When I decide to buy a car, if I can see that the price of gasoline is scheduled to go up about 10 cents per gallon automatically over the next 10 years, then I'm probably going to buy a car that uses less gasoline. And when I see heating, my gas, and my electricity bills going up and I can read the paper that says that they are going to go up every year, then I might put insulation in my attic that I have postponed for some amount of years. And gasoline goes up in price, I will make a decision whether I need to make that trip or can I combine the trips? So, in other words, it's going to affect millions of personal decisions.

In 2015, CCL proposed a tax of \$10 per metric ton of carbon dioxide, rising by a flat \$10 every year, to be levied on "the companies extracting the carbon from the earth." The funds from such a tax would be "distributed to the American public, stimulating the economy." Additional tariffs would be imposed on goods coming from countries without a similar carbon tax in place.⁶⁸ In turn, billions of dollars in revenues from a

carbon tax would be "returned to households as a monthly energy dividend," which would "help ensure that families and individuals can afford the energy they need during the transition to a greenhouse gas-free economy."⁶⁹

CCL was a strong supporter of the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act ([H.R. 763](#)), a bill introduced in January 2019 by Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL) that closely matches CCL's own proposals, but which never left committee. The bill—which was touted as bipartisan due to the co-sponsorship of a single Republican (Francis Rooney (R-FL)) out of a total of 65 co-sponsors—would have legislated a \$15 per metric ton tax, rising \$10 per year, to be collected in a Carbon Dividend Trust Fund and distributed in equal shares to the general public. Additionally, the bill would have levied a border-adjustment tax on imports from countries without a carbon tax.⁷⁰ A version of the bill was reintroduced in April 2021 with no Republican support.⁷²

FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT

Marshall Saunders is the founder and president of Citizens' Climate Lobby. Saunders is a longtime volunteer with the left-leaning advocacy group RESULTS, which lobbies for related to poverty, education, and tax policies with major funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.⁷³



Marshall Saunders, founder and president of Citizens' Climate Lobby, is a longtime volunteer with the left-leaning advocacy group RESULTS.

KEY STAFF

CCL staffers and Saunders have donated to the reelection campaigns of several Democrats. In the 2018 midterm election cycle, they donated to the campaigns of Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), as well as to the Kansas and Idaho Democratic Parties. Federal Election Commission (FEC) records indicate no donations to Republican candidates.⁷⁴

ADVISORY BOARD

RESULTS founder **Sam Daley-Harris** is a member of CCL's advisory board. In a 2013 interview Daley-Harris said he was approached by Marshall in 2007 "to coach him in starting the Citizens' Climate Lobby" after unsuccessfully asking a number of environmental groups to train CCL activists on climate issues.⁷⁵

CCL's advisory board boasts two notable Republicans: former Rep. Bob Inglis (R-SC) and former Reagan administration senior official George Shultz.

Bob Inglis is executive director of [RepublicEn](#), a nominally right-leaning group sponsored by the [Center for Climate Change Communications](#) at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. He lost his 2010 reelection bid to Tea Party Republican candidate Trey Gowdy, something he attributes largely to his support for global warming policies. "For many conservatives," Inglis said after losing the June 2010 primary, "it became the marker that you had crossed to Satan's side—that you had left God and gone to Satan's side on climate change."⁷⁶ He has been characterized by left-wing environmentalists as "a conservative who believes that climate change is real."⁷⁷

George Shultz (1920-2021) served as director of the Office of Management and Budget as well as the secretary of Labor, Treasury, and State Departments in the Reagan administration. He was chair of the Shultz-Stephenson Task Force on Energy Policy at the center-right Hoover Institution, based in Stanford University in California. Shultz co-

authored a 2013 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed with Gary Becker, an economics professor at the University of Chicago, calling for a "revenue-neutral carbon tax."⁷⁸ Shultz and former Reagan administration Secretary of State James Baker are the authors of the so-called Baker-Shultz carbon tax and dividend plan, which has been praised as "the most ambitious climate plan in history" by former Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen and Climate Leadership Council Chair Ted Halstead.⁷⁹ Shultz was, and Baker continues to be, a key member of the Climate Leadership Council, a leading eco-Right group.

Former Obama administration Energy Secretary **Steven Chu** (2009–2013) is also a member of CCL's advisory board. Chu's tenure was noted for its particular interest in advancing climate change policies and reducing gasoline consumption. In September 2008, the physicist and political activist talked about the country's need to figure out "how to boost the price of gasoline to the levels in Europe" (at that time, roughly \$8 per gallon). He later tried to walk back his statement.⁸⁰

CCL advisory board **James Hansen** has been called the "father of climate change awareness" for his extreme involvement in global warming activism.⁸¹ From 1981 to 2013, Hansen was director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York, New York, where he tried to advance public funding for global warming policies. In 2008, he famously told members of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global warming:

CEOs of fossil energy companies know what they are doing and are aware of long-term consequences of continued business as usual. In my opinion, these CEOs should be tried for high crimes against humanity and nature.⁸²

Hansen has been arrested multiple times outside the White House while protesting mining policies and the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline. He criticized President Obama's climate policies as insufficient, criticized the 2015 Paris Climate Accords as a "fraud" for not going far enough, and supports a global tax on carbon emissions.⁸³

CCL's advisory board also includes actors Don Cheadle and Bradley Whitford, as well as scientists

Sylvia Earle, Katherine Hayhoe, Shi-Ling Hsu, Daniel Kammen, David Titley, Peter de Menocal, and Hahrie Han. Advisory board member Barbara Love is professor emeritus of social justice education at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Advisory board member **Michael Gerrard** is an environmental law attorney; former chair of the American Bar Association's environment, energy, and resources section (2004–2005); and chairman of the Earth Institute, a left-leaning environmental research group.⁸⁴

Advisory board member **Adele Morris** is a senior fellow and policy director for Climate and Energy Economics at the Brookings Institution, where she has advocated for carbon pricing policies.⁸⁵

Advisory board member **Jay Butera** is a carbon tax supporter and political activist. He has been hailed as the “architect of [Congress] Climate Solutions Caucus” by former Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-FL), a carbon tax supporter, for aiding in the creation of the caucus in 2016.⁸⁶

Advisory board member **Betony Jones** is a former staffer for the Clinton administration and principle for the research firm Inclusive Economics.⁸⁷

Advisory board member **James Balog** is an environmental filmmaker and founder of the Earth Vision Institute, which promotes environmentalism through art and film.⁸⁸

FUNDING

Citizens' Climate Lobby. In 2018, CCL reported \$682,000 in total revenues (\$661,000 from grants), \$616,000 in total expenditures, and net assets of \$542,000.⁸⁹

In 2017, the group reported \$710,000 in total revenues (\$526,000 of which came from grants), \$476,000 in total expenditures, and net assets of

\$476,000.⁹⁰ From 2016 to 2017, CCL's revenues grew by nearly 177 percent.⁹¹

Because Citizens' Climate Lobby is a 501(c)(4) advocacy nonprofit, it isn't required by the IRS to disclose its donors and few are known. In 2017, the Hopewell Fund—part of the “dark money” nonprofit network managed by the consultancy Arabella Advisors—paid CCL \$15,000.⁹²

Citizens' Climate Education Corp. Citizens' Climate Education Corporation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and the clearinghouse for most of CCL's funding.

In 2018, CCEC reported \$3.2 million in total revenues (\$2.9 million of which came from grants), \$4.3 million in total expenditures, and \$1.7 million in net assets.⁹³

In 2017, the group reported \$4.8 million in total revenues (\$4.7 million of which came from grants), \$3.2 million in total expenditures, and net assets of \$2.7 million. Its largest program expense in 2017 was \$135,000 spent on its two-day annual climate conference.⁹⁴

While Citizens' Climate Education Corporation does not disclose its donors, data from the service FoundationSearch indicate major grants to the group from the following notable groups:

- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation (\$1.5 million since 2015),
- Jewish Community Foundation of San Diego (donor-advised fund provider) (\$575,000 since 2013), and
- Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund (donor-advised fund provider) (\$328,000 since 2014).

CLIMATE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL AND AMERICANS FOR CARBON DIVIDENDS

The Climate Leadership Council (CLC) might be considered one of the leading groups on the eco-Right. With support from Big Business and respected Republican Party elders, the CLC is arguably the best-positioned group to preach the carbon tax gospel to conservatives. But like most of the eco-Right, it pushes a global warming agenda with funding and strong support from the Left.

CLC was created in 2017 around a carbon tax and dividend proposed by two venerable Republicans: James Baker III and George P. Shultz, both former department secretaries in the Reagan administration. The Baker-Shultz plan, as it's commonly called, was introduced in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed and calls for a \$40 per metric ton carbon tax, which would ratchet up annually. The plan also includes a border-adjustment tax for “carbon content,” effectively a tariff on imports from countries without carbon pricing schemes.⁹⁵

The revenues from the Baker-Shultz carbon tax would then be paid to Americans via “carbon dividends”—a payoff to the people whose electricity bills and cost of living would dramatically rise because of Baker-Shultz’s carbon tax. Critically, this aspect gives CLC grounds to call its carbon tax “revenue-neutral.”⁹⁶

The Baker-Shultz plan is one of the first carbon tax schemes introduced on the Right and is particularly noteworthy for its prominent and well-respected namesakes. But just as important are the leftists supporting the Climate Leadership Council and its quest for carbon dividends.

The Climate Leadership Council was headed by [Ted Halstead](#), a self-described “policy entrepreneur” and environmental activist, from its creation until his death in September 2020. In a 2017 TED Talk promoting CLC, Halstead said he founded CLC “in order to counteract the excessive polarization of this issue [climate change] in the United States and to find a conservative pathway forward.”⁹⁷

While Halstead was not a radical—he authored the 2002 book *The Radical Center: The Future of American Politics*—he’s no conservative, either. In

1999, he founded the New America Foundation (now simply New America), a left-wing think tank he ran until 2007 when he was succeeded by former Anne-Marie Slaughter, former director of policy planning in President Obama’s State Department.⁹⁸ One of New America’s longtime goals is spreading left-wing climate change policies among evangelical Christians, a campaign it calls “creation care.” New America is heavily funded by left-wing foundations, and George Soros has donated at least \$7.7 million to the group since 1999.⁹⁹



Electricity bills and cost of living would dramatically rise because of Baker-Shultz’s carbon tax.

CLC’s advisory board is a similarly mixed bag. Besides “Distinguished Co-Authors” James Baker III and the late George P. Shultz (1920-2021), it features prominent Republicans from the George W. Bush administration as well as former Obama administration Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, and liberal former Federal Reserve Chairs Ben Bernanke and Janet Yellin.¹⁰⁰ The inclusion of partisans from both major political parties allows the CLC to promote itself as “bipartisan.”

SUPPORT FROM BIG OIL AND GAS

At launch, the Climate Leadership Council touted its impressive list of founding members, which included major oil and gas producers, environmental groups like the Nature Conservancy, and notable people in business and government, particularly Republicans.¹⁰¹ Unlike most on the eco-Right, the CLC enjoys strong support from Big Oil. Why?

One financial analyst speculated shortly after CLC was announced that the companies “want

to see a government-mandated increase to natural gas consumption at the expense of coal,” noting that their sudden support for a carbon tax came just three weeks after the Trump administration announced its decision to withdraw from the 2015 Paris Climate Accords, an international global warming agreement joined by President Obama.¹⁰²

How better to beat the competition than by weaponizing government regulation?

It wouldn't be the first time that gas producers have targeted the coal industry for extinction. Enron—the innovative \$100 billion company that disintegrated in 2001 amid scandal—was formed from a 1985 merger of two natural gas producers that sought to carve out a global market for natural gas, eventually with the government's help.¹⁰³ Spotting opportunity, the company lobbied the George W. Bush administration to cap CO₂ emissions in line with the 2001 Kyoto Protocol on global warming, allowing Enron to broker CO₂ emissions permits to CO₂-producing natural gas, oil, and—critically—coal producers.

Given that coal emits roughly twice as much carbon dioxide when burned as natural gas, industry experts have noted that the goal of those permits

was to “dial coal out of the economy.”¹⁰⁴ Internal correspondence later showed that Enron employees believed Kyoto—a predecessor to the 2015 Paris Climate Accords—would “do more to promote Enron's business” than any other single regulation.¹⁰⁵

While one can only speculate on the motives of CLC's Big Business supporters, none of them

are coal producers. ExxonMobil sold its last coal mine in Monterey, California, in 2009.¹⁰⁶ In 2015, Total, a French multinational, sold its last coal mine in South Africa. A company press release stated, “Faced with the issue of climate change, Total is committed to promoting the use of natural gas, the cleanest fossil fuel, especially compared to coal. . . . We have also decided to divest our coal marketing operations” by 2016.¹⁰⁷ And Royal Dutch Shell quit its coal mines in 2015, with CEO Ben Van Beurden announcing that the company was transitioning from an “oil-and-gas” to a “gas-and-oil” company.¹⁰⁸

CARBON TAX ADVOCACY

CLC announced itself in June 2017 with a full-page advertisement in the *Wall Street Journal* calling for a carbon tax, which it labeled a bipartisan “consensus climate solution.” Consistent with the Baker-Shultz *Wall Street Journal*

As Advertised In

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Tuesday, June 20, 2017

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

THE CONSENSUS CLIMATE SOLUTION

The Founding Members of the Climate Leadership Council believe that America needs a consensus climate solution that bridges partisan divides, strengthens our economy and protects our shared environment.

The Council's carbon dividends solution embodies the conservative principles of free markets and limited government. It also offers an equitable, popular and politically-viable way forward, paving the way for a much-needed bipartisan climate breakthrough.

Our carbon dividends program is based on four interdependent pillars:

1. A gradually rising and revenue-neutral carbon tax;
2. Carbon dividend payments to all Americans, funded by 100% of the revenue;
3. The rollback of carbon regulations that are no longer necessary; and
4. Border carbon adjustments to level the playing field and promote American competitiveness.

This plan would achieve significantly greater emissions reductions than all current and prior climate regulations, while helping America's businesses and workers get ahead. In fact, the bottom 70% of Americans would be financially better off.

Our carbon dividends solution is: Pro-Environment, Pro-Growth, Pro-Jobs, Pro-Competitiveness, Pro-Business and Pro-National Security.

Working with a range of constituencies, the Climate Leadership Council will develop and promote a consensus climate solution based on these pillars.

Corporate Founding Members

bp ExxonMobil GM Johnson & Johnson P&G PEPSICO Santander Schneider Electric Shell TOTAL Unilever

NGO Founding Members

CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL The Nature Conservancy

Individual Founding Members

Michael Bloomberg Steven Chu Ray Dalio Martin Feldstein Ted Halstead Stephen Hawking Vinod Khosla N. Gregory Mankiw Gregory Page Laurene Powell Jobs Thomas Stephenson Lawrence Summers Ratan Tata Rob Walton

Distinguished Co-Authors

James A. Baker, III George P. Shultz

CLIMATE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

To learn more visit: www.clcouncil.org
Watch our TED Talk: go.ted.com/tedhalstead
Paid for by the Climate Leadership Council

Climate Leadership Council's full-page Wall Street Journal advertisement.

op-ed launched with the ad, CLC simultaneously promised a four-pillared panacea to global warming:

1. “A gradually rising and revenue-neutral carbon tax;
2. Carbon dividend payments to all Americans, funded by 100 percent of the revenue;
3. The rollback of carbon regulations that are no longer necessary; and
4. Border carbon adjustments to level the playing field and promote American competitiveness.”¹⁰⁹

As CLC’s president, Ted Halstead described his climate tax and dividend as the “killer app” of climate policy. The group wants a carbon tax starting at \$40 per ton of carbon dioxide, targeting “all fossil fuels and non-fuel CO₂ emissions,” imported and domestic, as well as “energy-intensive manufactured products”—which products is unclear. CLC also calls for overturning all major Obama-era climate regulations, including the EPA’s Clean Power Plan (overturned by President Trump), an end to tort liability by emitters, and removing the EPA’s authority to regulate CO₂ emissions.¹¹⁰

Halstead believed CLC’s approach appeals to liberals and conservatives alike, but only with a *dividend* to complement a carbon tax, something groups on the Left have been reluctant to embrace. The tax by itself, he’s admitted, “has proven to be unpopular and a political dead-end.”¹¹¹ That isn’t surprising, since the dividend—a monthly lump sum paid to every household nationwide—is how CLC justifies calling its carbon tax “revenue-neutral.” CLC claims that a rate of \$40 per ton would result in dividends of \$2,000 per year for a family of four. The group argues that this payoff would more than offset any increases in household electricity prices, including the \$0.36 per gallon it estimates the tax would add to gas prices.¹¹²

If implemented in 2021, CLC claims its carbon tax and dividend will cut CO₂ emissions in half by 2035, as compared with 2005 levels.¹¹³ But these figures are wildly optimistic. A 2014 study by the Heritage Foundation charted the effects of a \$37 per ton carbon tax and dividend. Over a 15-year period, the study estimated that the tax would cause:

- An average employment shortfall of nearly 300,000 jobs,
- A peak employment shortfall of more than 1 million jobs, 500,000 jobs lost in manufacturing,
- Destruction of more than 45 percent of coal-mining jobs,
- An aggregate gross domestic product (GDP) loss of more than \$2.5 trillion (inflation-adjusted), and
- A total income loss of more than \$7,000 per person (inflation-adjusted).¹¹⁴

Undoubtedly, CLC’s carbon tax and dividend would reduce CO₂ emissions—after all, obliterating manufacturing and fossil fuels would necessarily reduce all greenhouse gas emissions to zero.

But what about its effect on the climate?

The Cato Institute considered similar carbon tax analysis by the EPA and concluded that, at best, it would reduce global warming by 0.02 degrees Celsius by the end of the century.¹¹⁵ If the U.S. ceased *all* economic activity and cut carbon dioxide emissions to zero, it would only lower global temperatures “by no more 0.2 degrees Celsius by 2100.”¹¹⁶ It doesn’t take a science degree to see that that’s a bad deal.

CARBON BORDER-ADJUSTMENT TAX

Besides a carbon tax and dividend, CLC proposed a border-adjustment tax—essentially a tariff on imported goods from countries that don’t have carbon pricing systems.

The system would work like this: U.S. exports to countries without carbon pricing systems are given a rebate, while imports from those same countries are taxed (CLC prefers the term “fees”). The goal of the program is to stop “free-riding by other nations” outcompeting American companies crippled by a carbon tax. In other words, the program seeks to make self-destruction *global*, not *unilateral*.¹¹⁷

The tariff promotes a kind of eco-imperialism: countries with self-destructive carbon schemes—located exclusively in the wealthy West—would be commercially favored over poor, developing countries. Countries that don't wish to subject their citizens to expensive electricity plans would be punished for it—something CLC proudly calls the “climate domino effect.”¹¹⁸

The revenues from the tariff would be redistributed to Americans like those from the carbon tax. But this begs the question: If tariffs raise prices on imported goods bought in the U.S., aren't we robbing Peter to pay Paul?

TARGETING THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

CLC's carbon tax and dividend is primarily targeted at winning support in the Republican Party. “I'm convinced that the road to climate progress in the United States runs through the Republican Party and the business community,” Ted Halstead said at a TED Talk he hosted in 2017, entitled “A Climate Solution Where All Sides Can Win.”¹¹⁹

The College Republicans adopted CLC's carbon tax and dividend in 2018, pitching it as a “free-market solution” to global warming.¹²⁰

CLC's plan is more aggressive than any carbon tax yet introduced by congressional Republicans, and it hasn't been endorsed by any members of Congress. How does it compare with past GOP carbon taxes?

The 2018 carbon tax (MARKET CHOICE Act) introduced by Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-FL) called for a \$24 per metric ton tax on CO₂ emissions starting in 2020, rising 2 percent per year plus inflation, and a border-adjustment tax. It did not include a carbon dividend for taxpayers.¹²¹

The carbon tax (MARKET CHOICE Act) introduced in 2019 by Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and Francis Rooney (R-FL) and co-sponsored by two Democrats bears some similarities to CLC's proposal. The bill would create a carbon tax of \$35 per metric ton of carbon dioxide starting in 2021, increasing by 5 percent each year (plus inflation),



If the U.S. ceased all economic activity and cut carbon dioxide emissions to zero, it would only lower global temperatures “by no more 0.2 degrees Celsius by 2100.”

to replace the federal gas tax. The bill also includes a border-adjustment tax like that proposed by CLC. Unlike CLC's carbon dividend, however, the Fitzpatrick-Rooney bill doesn't distribute revenues to taxpayers, instead spending funds on highway infrastructure, “farmer assistance,” weatherization, and other such projects.¹²²

AMERICANS FOR CARBON DIVIDENDS

Americans for Carbon Dividends (AFCD) is the 501(c)(4) advocacy arm created in November 2018 to lobby Congress in support of CLC's carbon tax.¹²³

ACFD was initially headed by Ted Halstead until his death in late 2020, when he was succeeded by Greg Bertelsen, a former policy director for the National Association of Manufacturers who also leads CLC. At its creation, AFCD was managed by former Republican Rep. Ryan Costello (PA), a two-term congressman and former member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce who didn't seek reelection in the 2018 midterm election; he's been succeeded by Tiffany Adams, a former public affairs vice president for the consultancy Forbes Tate Partners.¹²⁴ Since retiring, Costello has opened a government affairs consulting firm—Ryan Costello Strategies—in Washington, DC; as a former member of Congress, he was legally barred from lobbying before Congress until January 2020.¹²⁵

In 2018, the group spent \$300,000 in lobbying expenditures to build support for the Baker-Shultz carbon tax in the U.S. House of Representatives, Senate, and White House.¹²⁶ As of May 2020,

AFCF has spent \$1.76 million in lobbying, much of it in support of the Baker-Shultz Carbon Dividends Plan.¹²⁷

The money was paid to Squire Patton Boggs, a major international law firm and the third-largest lobbying company in the country, which employs AFCF's lobbyists: mainly John Breaux and Trent Lott. Breaux and Lott are former U.S. Senators who founded a lobbying firm, the Breaux-Lott Leadership Group after retiring from public office; the firm was later purchased by Squire Patton Boggs.¹²⁸ Interestingly, they're credited by some media sources as the co-founders of Americans for Carbon Dividends, which lists them as Advisory Board co-chairs.¹²⁹

Breaux, a Democrat, represented Louisiana from 1987 to 2005. Lott, a Democrat-turned-Republican, represented Mississippi in the House and Senate from 1973 to 2007 and was briefly Senate Majority Leader in 2001, though he stepped down amid criticism after speaking at the 100th birthday party of Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-SC), a Democrat-turned-Republican who advocated continued racial segregation.¹³⁰ Lott is also a senior fellow at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a group that leans left despite its name.¹³¹

Another Squire Patton Boggs lobbyist working for AFCF is David Schnittger, former deputy chief of staff to ex-Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-OH), whose other clients in 2019 included CLC supporters Royal Dutch Shell, Procter & Gamble, and the Solar Energy Industries Association. Similarly, Squire Patton Boggs lobbyist Matthew Cutts is a registered lobbyist for AFCF and Royal Dutch Shell.¹³²

AFCF senior adviser Joe Lockhart was press secretary for the Clinton administration (1998–2000) and other Democrats include Vice President Walter Mondale, Rep. Paul Simon (D-IL), 2004 presidential nominee John Kerry, and Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis.¹³³

The group is also advised by Mark McKinnon, a television co-producer, gay marriage advocate, and left-leaning political activist. McKinnon is an Advisory Board member to the left-wing “anti-

corruption” group Represent.Us and co-founder of No Labels, a nominally centrist advocacy nonprofit heavily funded by the left-wing William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and Pierre Omidyar's Democracy Fund.¹³⁴

LEADERSHIP AND FOUNDING MEMBERS

Ted Halstead. Ted Halstead was president of the Climate Leadership Council from its creation until his death in September 2020. Halstead was a self-described “policy entrepreneur,” notable for founding several left-leaning or centrist think tanks since the early 1990s. He's also the author of two books: *The Radical Center: The Future of American Politics*, written in 2001 with New America fellow Michal Lind, which imagines a coming breakdown of the two-party system, and *The Real State of the Union: From the Best Minds in America, Bold Solutions to the Problems Politicians Dare Not Address* in 2004, a collection of essays on various policy issues he sees confronting the country.¹³⁵

Halstead's first venture was with Redefining Progress, a San Francisco-based think tank he started in 1993 to develop environmentalist economic policies using startup capital from the environmentalist group Echoing Green.¹³⁶ He was the group's executive director until 1997, when he moved to its board of directors. That same year, the group released its Economists' Statement on Climate Change, which argued for market-based carbon pricing schemes and obtained some 2,600 signatures.¹³⁷ It closed in 2008.

During his tenure at Redefining Progress, Halstead authored a 1995 *Washington Post* op-ed calling for a kind of carbon tax (what he referred to then as a “resource tax”), which would replace federal payroll and income taxes “with taxes on the use of finite resources such as oil and coal, on pollution and on virgin materials that end up in the trash.”¹³⁸

In 1999, Halstead founded New America (then the New America Foundation), a left-leaning think tank, which he led until 2007. The group purports to reject ideology in favor of pragmatism, but it's

closely connected with the Obama administration. In 2009, New America began receiving federal contracts from the State Department to develop wireless networks in Iran, Syria, Libya, and Cuba (contracts that some alumni criticized as impinging on the group's independence).¹³⁹

CEO Anne-Marie Slaughter worked in Hillary Clinton's State Department from 2009 to 2011 before taking the reins of New America in 2013. Slaughter is hardly nonpartisan, accusing President Trump of "defiling and degrading" the presidency.¹⁴⁰ New America COO Tyra Mariani was chief of staff to Obama's Department of Education.¹⁴¹

Vice President Cecilia Muñoz was a senior staffer for all eight years of the Obama administration. Prior to that, she was senior vice president for the left-wing Latino advocacy group UnidosUS (formerly National Council of La Raza, or "the race").¹⁴²

While New America is nominally centrist and technically nonpartisan, it's heavily funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, George Soros's Foundation to Promote Open Society, the Ford Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.¹⁴³

According to CLC's IRS Form 990 filing for 2018, Halstead's total compensation was \$356,188.¹⁴⁴

Senior Staffers. Greg Bertelsen is CLC's chief executive officer, succeeding Halstead after his death. According to the group's website, he is a liaison to Congress and the business community.

He previously worked at the National Association of Manufacturers and was an adviser to the EPA on "environmental justice" issues during the Obama administration.¹⁴⁵ In 2018, Bertelsen received total compensation of \$270,823.¹⁴⁶



Ted Halstead, president of the Climate Leadership Council, was a self-described "policy entrepreneur," notable for founding several left-leaning or centrist think tanks since the early 1990s.

Simone Frank is the group's chief financial officer. She is also a senior adviser for the centrist Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget and previously worked at Halstead's think tank New America.¹⁴⁷ In 2018, Frank received total compensation of \$105,840.¹⁴⁸

Jill Sigal is CLC's senior vice president. She previously worked as acting assistant secretary of energy in the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs. In 2005, she was nominated by President George W. Bush to serve as assistant secretary of energy to the Bush administration.¹⁴⁹ In 2018, Sigal received total compensation of \$141,668.¹⁵⁰

Catrina Rorke is a CLC vice president. She is an associate fellow for the right-leaning [R Street Institute](#), a think tank, where she founded the group's energy program. Prior to that, she was a fellow at the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA) and was a staffer for the liberal Republican Rep. Bob Inglis (SC), who lost his seat in 2010 largely due to his views on manmade global warming.¹⁵¹ In 2018, she received total compensation of \$112,401.¹⁵²

Taiya Smith is director of CLC's China Program. In 2018, she received total compensation of \$284,669.¹⁵³

Board of Directors. Ted Halstead was chairman of CLC's board of directors, which includes a number of influential liberals and conservatives.¹⁵⁴

Martin "Marty" Kaplan is a former chair of the Massachusetts Board of Education. Kaplan was a trustee for the Germeshausen Foundation, a major funder of CLC, from the 1980s to approximately 2014.¹⁵⁵ According to filings obtained by the Capital Research Center, Kaplan is officially a co-founder of CLC. He and Halstead are listed on the group's IRS application for recognition of tax-exempt status.¹⁵⁶

Kathryn Murdoch, daughter-in-law of conservative billionaire and Fox News founder Rupert Murdoch, joined CLC's board in December 2018. Kathryn and her husband, James, apparently form the liberal wing of the family. A September 2019 *New York Times* article states that the couple "are claiming their independence from the more conservative arm of the family," largely over their belief in manmade climate change. According to the *Times*,

The urgency of the climate crisis jolted her. "I decided to switch everything I was doing," [Murdoch] said. "I wanted to be able to look my children in the eye and say 'I did everything I could.'"¹⁵⁷

Board member Juleanna Glover is a lobbyist who is a former staffer in the President George W. Bush administration.¹⁵⁸

Robert Litterman is chairman of Risk Management for Kepos Capital, a New York-based investment management firm. He's a major advocate for a carbon tax, seeing climate change as a "solvable" issue using traditional risk management strategies. He's also on the boards of the eco-Right group Niskanen Center, the Commonfund (an asset management firm for nonprofits), and the World Wildlife Fund and Resources for the Future, both left-wing environmental groups that have received substantial funding from Litterman's personal foundation.¹⁵⁹ Litterman has granted at least

\$160,000 to the Niskanen Center as well as the left-wing groups Environmental Defence, Climate Central, and Planned Parenthood.¹⁶⁰

Craig McCaw also serves on the board of the Hoover Institution and was the former chair of the liberal Nature Conservancy. McCaw's private foundation, the Craig and Susan McCaw Foundation, granted \$500,000 to CLC in 2017.¹⁶¹

Gary Rieschel is the founding partner of Qiming Venture Partners, one of China's largest venture capital firms.¹⁶²

Founding Members. The Climate Leadership Council boasts support from major companies, energy producers, left-leaning nonprofits, and influential figures in government and business.¹⁶³

Corporate Founding Members.

- AECOM
- Allianz
- AT&T
- BHP
- BP (British Petroleum)
- Calpine
- ConocoPhillips
- Exelon
- ExxonMobil
- First Solar
- Ford Motor Company
- General Motors
- Johnson & Johnson
- MetLife
- Microsoft
- Royal Dutch Shell
- Procter & Gamble
- Pepsico
- Santander
- Schneider Electric
- Total
- Unilever

Nonprofit Founding Members and Strategic Partners. Most of the nonprofits supporting CLC are aligned with the political Left. Worth noting are the endorsements of New America, a think tank Halstead formed in 1999, and Citizens' Climate Lobby, a major carbon tax advocate.

- American Wind Energy Association
- Atlantic Council
- Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition
- Citizens' Climate Lobby
- Clean Prosperity
- Conservation International
- Evangelical Environmental Network
- New America
- Policy Exchange
- RepublicEn (George Mason University)
- University of Oxford, Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Weather Channel
- World Resources Institute
- World Wildlife Fund

Individual Founding Members. CLC touts its impressive list of endorsements from notables in government and business, including Republicans from the Reagan and both Bush administrations. The list includes many prominent members of the Clinton and Obama administration as well as centrist Democrats.

- James A. Baker III, former White House Chief of Staff, U.S. Treasury Department Secretary (Reagan administration)
- Ben Bernanke, former Federal Reserve chair (2006-2014)
- Michael Bloomberg, Businessman and Former New York City Mayor
- Steven Chu, Physicist and former U.S. Energy Department Secretary (Obama administration)

- Ray Dalio, hedge fund manager and co-chairman, Bridgewater Associates
- Martin Feldstein, economist and former chief economic adviser to President Reagan
- Stephen Hawking, physicist
- Vinod Khosla, venture capitalist and co-founder, Sun Microsystems
- Nicholas Gregory Mankiw, economist and former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers (George W. Bush administration)
- Gregory Page, former executive chairman of Cargill Inc.
- Raul Polman, former president for Western Europe of Procter & Gamble and former CEO of Unilever (both companies have endorsed CLC's carbon tax)
- Laurene Powell Jobs, Philanthropist and widow of Steve Jobs
- Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum
- George P. Shultz (1920-2021), former U.S. secretary of state (Reagan administration)
- Thomas Stephenson, former U.S. ambassador to Portugal (George W. Bush and Obama administrations)
- Lawrence Summers, economist, former vice president of development economics for the World Bank, and former U.S. secretary of the treasury (Clinton administration)
- Ratan Tata, investor and chairman, Tata Group
- Samuel Robson "Rob" Walton, former chair of Walmart and son of Walmart founder Sam Walton
- Janet Yellen, former Federal Reserve chair and chair of White House Council of Economic Advisers (Clinton administration)

FUNDING

Climate Leadership Council. CLC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that received its tax exemption from the IRS in September 2016, a few months prior to its public launch in 2017.¹⁶⁴

As CLC is so new that little information is available about its funders. In 2016, the group filed a Form 990-N postcard with the IRS, indicating that it received less than \$50,000 in revenues for that year.¹⁶⁵

In 2017, however, CLC had a banner year with total revenues of \$4.2 million (all of which came from grants, as opposed to investment revenue), total expenditures of \$1.4 million, and net assets of \$2.8 million—all of which indicates rapid growth and a substantial “endowment” from supporters.¹⁶⁶ CLC also paid out \$64,265 in grants in 2017, all of which went to unspecified groups in Europe.¹⁶⁷

In 2018, CLC’s income shrank to \$1.7 million (all from grants), and it also reported total expenditures of \$2.6 million and net assets of \$1.9 million.¹⁶⁸ Interestingly, CLC paid out \$128,000 in grants and program expenditures in Europe and Asia that year, but it made one grant to a U.S.-based group: \$50,000 to the left-wing think tank Urban Institute for “carbon dividends research.”¹⁶⁹

While CLC isn’t required to report its donors, data from the service FoundationSearch indicate grants from a number of center-left foundations totaling \$1.35 million in 2016-2017. One CLC contributor, the McCaw Foundation, is the private philanthropy of Craig McCaw, a CLC board member.¹⁷⁰

- Goldman Sachs Philanthropy Fund (a donor-advised fund provider): \$500,000

- Craig and Susan McCaw Foundation: \$500,000
- Arnhold Foundation: \$150,000
- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation: \$100,000
- Germeshausen Foundation: \$100,000

CLC has also been awarded substantial grants from Arnold Ventures, a for-profit extension of the left-wing mega-funder the Laura and John Arnold Foundation. Between 2017 and 2021, Arnold Ventures has awarded CLC as much as \$4.5 million; the final grant amounts remain unclear.¹⁷¹

Whomever its remaining donors are, they’re big.

In 2017, CLC’s biggest donation was for an impressive \$1.5 million. It reported more donations of \$750,000, \$550,000, and \$500,000.¹⁷²

In 2018, donations to CLC ranged as high as \$500,000. Other large donations were for \$350,000, \$200,000, and four grants of \$100,000 each.¹⁷³

Americans for Carbon Dividends. Americans for Carbon Dividends is a 501(c)(4) advocacy nonprofit that received a tax exemption from the IRS in November 2018.¹⁷⁴ According to its 2018 IRS Form 990 filing, AFCD reported total revenues of \$2.8 million (all of which came from grants), total expenditures of \$460,000, and net assets of \$2.3 million.¹⁷⁵

Few of AFCD’s donors are known. However, ExxonMobil—a CLC supporter—has reportedly contributed \$1 million to AFCD.¹⁷⁶ ConocoPhillips has given the group another \$2 million.¹⁷⁷

THE NISKANEN CENTER

The [Niskanen Center](#) is a nominally right-leaning think tank that's best described as "libertarian-turned-liberal" owing to its general abandonment of libertarianism and marked turn to the left.

Niskanen was formed after a 2014 rift between the libertarian Cato Institute and a handful of staffers—most notably then-vice president Jerry Taylor—who adopted the theory of catastrophic manmade global warming. In early 2015, they broke away to form the Niskanen Center, a separate think tank headed by Taylor. Since then, the group has been criticized by observers on the political Right as an "infiltrator" in the conservative/liberty movement for attempting to legitimize left-wing views of climate change among conservatives and libertarians and for its substantial funding from left-wing foundations.¹⁷⁸

The group has provided pro bono legal representation to plaintiffs suing oil companies ExxonMobil and Suncor in 2018, with Taylor arguing that "oil companies should be held accountable for climate change."¹⁷⁹ Notably, Niskanen chief counsel David Bookbinder is the former chief climate counsel to the Sierra Club, where he was involved in the 2007 Supreme Court case *Massachusetts v. EPA*, which established the EPA's authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁸⁰

The Niskanen Center authors publish reports on a number of issues—including poverty, regulation, fiscal and monetary policy, immigration, and health care—but it's arguably best known for its full-throated defense of climate alarmism. Niskanen president Jerry Taylor is a prominent defender of carbon taxes and the author of an extensive 2015 paper "The Conservative Case for a Carbon Tax."¹⁸¹

The center is named for William Niskanen, a senior economic aide to President Ronald Reagan and longtime Cato Institute chairman who died in 2011, four years before the center's founding.¹⁸² Yet the climate alarmism espoused by Taylor and the Niskanen Center has been described by Cato Institute adjunct scholar Robert L. Bradley Jr. as "violat[ing] the spirit and memory of William Niskanen, who never bought into climate alarmism/

forced energy transformation—and who was not interested in second-best in this area."¹⁸³



The Niskanen Center is a nominally right-leaning think tank that's best described as "libertarian-turned-liberal" owing to its general abandonment of libertarianism and marked turn to the left.

[William] Niskanen understood the politics of the climate issue and motivations of the other side and was not about to let a theoretical ideal about controlling real pollutants (choosing taxation over command-and-control) change his views about carbon dioxide. That [Jerry] Taylor is using climate advocacy to fund his new center is a double whammy to Niskanen's memory. The Niskanen Center should be renamed. And "libertarian" should be taken out of its descriptive and promotional material for so long as climate alarmism/forced energy transformation is atop the masthead.

ABANDONED LIBERTARIANISM AND ATTACKS CONSERVATISM

Despite its decidedly liberal views on numerous political issues, the Niskanen Center originally identified itself as a "libertarian advocacy organization." In the group's IRS Form 990 filings for 2015 and 2016, for instance, Niskanen called

itself “a libertarian 501(c)(3) think tank.” But as of its 2017 filing, it’s just a “501(c)(3) think tank.”¹⁸⁴

In October 2018, president Jerry Taylor wrote that he had “abandoned” his left-leaning libertarianism in a piece entitled “The Alternative to Ideology” (he now prefers to describe himself as “a Republican”):

When we launched the Niskanen Center in January 2015, we happily identified ourselves as libertarians. Sure, we were heterodox libertarians, but there are many schools of libertarianism beyond those promoted by Charles Koch’s political operations. The school we identified with was a left-libertarianism concerned with social justice. . . . I have abandoned that libertarian project, however, because I have come to abandon ideology.¹⁸⁵

Groups on the left praised Taylor’s announcement. “A libertarian think tank just gave up on libertarianism,” wrote the left-leaning website Quartz, which hailed Taylor even as it lamented that “ever fewer temperate souls are left to hold the middle ground in politics.”¹⁸⁶ *New York Magazine*’s Jonathan Chait, a liberal, noted that Niskanen’s pro-big government ideas constitute “frontal assaults on the basic orientation of the libertarian political project.”¹⁸⁷



The Niskanen Center hosted “Starting Over: The Center-Right After Trump,” a 2019 conference where New York Magazine’s Jonathan Chait applauded the group’s attacks on conservatives as the future of the Republican Party.

In early 2019, Niskanen hosted a conference in which Chait applauded the group’s attacks on conservatives as the future of the Republican Party. “The Niskanen Center is the one institution planning for what can follow after the cleansing fire,” he said, referring to an imaginary point in the near future when “today’s Republican Party is destroyed, rendered incapable of wielding power at the national level, and its governing philosophy discredited completely.”¹⁸⁸

ADOPTION OF “OPEN SOCIETY” THEORY

Ironically, Taylor’s newfound “alternative to ideology” is itself the ideology held by elite liberal globalists called the “open society.” If that sounds familiar, that is because billionaire George Soros made it famous with his handful of ultra-wealthy groups, including the Foundation to Promote Open Society, Open Society Policy Center, and Open Society Foundations.

The “open society” theory was envisioned by Karl Popper, a philosopher and former Marxist who advocated for social engineering. A 1994 obituary by the center-right magazine *Reason* called him an “anti-authoritarian” who was “not a doctrinaire libertarian.”¹⁸⁹

According to a recent conspectus published by the group intended for donors, Niskanen describes its *new* mission as “work[ing] to promote an open society both through active engagement in the war of ideas and direct engagement in the policymaking process.”¹⁹⁰

We are globalists who share progressives’ desire to robustly address economic and social inequality, liberals’ commitment to toleration and civil liberties, moderates’ embrace of empiricism rather than dogma, conservatives’ belief in the wealth-creating power of free markets, and libertarians’ skepticism about the ability of technocratic elites to solve complex economic and social problems.¹⁹¹

Niskanen runs the Open Society Project, an anti-Trump attack group created in November 2016 with funding from eBay founder and liberal billionaire Pierre Omidyar. Niskanen claims the project's "Meeting of the Concerned" led to the creation of Bill Kristol's Republicans for the Rule of Law (also funded by Omidyar), which regularly launches ads accusing President Trump of "obstruct[ing] justice."¹⁹²

Critically, the group identifies itself as an effective door for the Left to infiltrate the Right:

As an organization heavily staffed by those who have come out of the world of libertarianism, we have long-standing personal ties and credibility on the right. This is critical because the messenger is often more important than the message, and few who traffic in our arguments have any credibility with conservatives (the political audience that arguably needs to hear our arguments the most). . . .

Accordingly, we educate policy actors about climate science and directly confront climate skeptics; encourage Republicans to defend regulatory authority to address greenhouse gas emissions . . . and, above all, promote carbon taxation as the best federal response to climate risk.¹⁹³

SUPPORT FOR THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Taylor has even called himself "a friend" of the far-left activists pushing the Green New Deal, calling their cause "just" if "sometimes given to overstatement." In a bizarre 11,000-word love



Niskanen's Open Society Project and Bill Kristol's Republicans for the Rule of Law are both anti-Trump groups funded by liberal billionaire Pierre Omidyar.

letter to the movement, Taylor offers advice to climate change alarmists about how to avoid conservative criticism:

You are inadvertently confirming conservative suspicions that you are stoking fears about climate change as a convenient excuse to achieve your real objective: dismantling capitalism as we know it and putting society on a wartime footing under the direction of avowed socialists.

While that's an unfair characterization of the motivations of most of the climate activists I know, "solution aversion" and the suspicion that environmentalists are fundamentally hostile to contemporary American society are two key factors fueling conservative opposition to climate action. [emphasis added]¹⁹⁴

"The most important thing you've done right," Taylor concluded, "is to elevate climate change to the top of the progressive agenda while making a strong moral case for action."¹⁹⁵

CLIMATE CHANGE LAWSUITS

The Niskanen Center has been tied to at least one climate-related lawsuit.

In April 2018, the City of Boulder, Colorado, and County of San Miguel, Colorado, filed a lawsuit against oil and natural gas companies ExxonMobil and Suncor, accusing the “fossil fuel-producing corporations” of harming the climate.¹⁹⁶ The Colorado communities were represented in the lawsuit by a joint climate group which included Hannon Law Firm—a group that litigates environmental lawsuits and whose founder Kevin Hannon was chief outside legal counsel in the suit—the environmentalist nonprofit EarthRights International, and the Niskanen Center, which represented the plaintiffs pro bono.¹⁹⁷

Taylor and Niskanen chief counsel David Bookbinder co-authored a blog post in April 2018 entitled, “Oil companies should be held accountable for climate change.”¹⁹⁸

The climate litigators claimed that ExxonMobil and Suncor were culpable for over \$100 million in climate damages—including wildfires, flooding, road maintenance, landscaping, and individuals work efficiency.¹⁹⁹

Two Cato Institute experts, Randal O’Toole and Robert Bradley Jr., individuals who had known William Niskanen, criticized the Niskanen Center’s involvement in the lawsuit as going directly against the memory of Niskanen and what he believed with regard to climate policy. They related William Niskanen’s belief that “the case for a global warming treaty is shockingly weak” and that he had “never bought into climate alarmism.”²⁰⁰

NISKANEN CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY

The [Niskanen Center for Public Policy](#) is the 501(c)(4) lobbying arm of the Niskanen Center. Interestingly, the lobbying group received an IRS tax exemption in February 2016 but appears to be all but dormant, reporting low revenues and almost

no expenditures in 2017 (the latest available year).²⁰¹ Little about the group is published online, and it does not have a website of its own.

Nevertheless, the group describes its mission in part as “developing and advocating for legislation, regulations, and government programs to improve the environment, protect natural resources, and stimulate the economy.”²⁰² It remains unclear how much lobbying the group has actually done thus far.

The Conservative Case for a Carbon Tax. Arguing for a carbon tax has become a major priority of the Niskanen Center. In March 2015, the Niskanen Center released “The Conservative Case for a Carbon Tax,” a 28-page proposal authored by president Jerry Taylor. In it, Taylor argued that “conservatives should embrace a carbon tax” instead of debating the merits of catastrophic manmade climate change or global warming theory. The only alternative he allows is “command and control” regulation proposed by radicals on the Left, such as cap-and-trade bills and other onerous policies.

A carbon tax, Taylor wrote, should be passed “in return for elimination of EPA regulatory authority over greenhouse gas emissions, abolition of green energy subsidies and regulatory mandates, and offsetting tax cuts to provide for revenue neutrality.” The costs of a carbon tax would be “invisible” to energy consumers.²⁰³

The Niskanen Center is a major proponent of a tax on carbon dioxide emissions. It has called for a tax on methane produced by agriculture (“especially the livestock sector”) as well as oil and natural gas.²⁰⁴ It supported California’s cap-and-trade program extension in 2016 but pushed for a carbon tax, which would supposedly make “California an even more competitive economic dynamo.”²⁰⁵

Niskanen is credited with assisting then-Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-FL) with introducing the carbon tax bill MARKET CHOICE Act (H.R. 6463) in 2018. The Republican majority in the U.S. House of Representatives rejected the bill, and the House later passed a resolution (H.Con.Res. 119) “expressing the sense of Congress that a carbon tax would be detrimental to the United States economy.”

In September 2019, Niskanen announced its support for the 2019 MARKET CHOICE Act, a carbon tax plan introduced by Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Francis Rooney (R-FL), Salud Carbajal (D-CA), and Scott Peters (D-CA).²⁰⁶

Jerry Taylor has stated his support for a plan proposed by the Stanford Energy Modeling Forum, which would enact a \$65 per ton tax on carbon dioxide emissions by 2022, rising to \$296 per ton in 2045. Taylor has claimed that the total cost to the U.S. economy from this plan “would be less than 0.2 percent of GDP.”²⁰⁷

Taylor’s essentially costless estimate is, to be charitable, *optimistic*. To put it in perspective, the carbon tax proposed by Rep. Curbelo in 2018 set a \$24 tax per ton of carbon dioxide starting in 2020—a level the center-right Competitive Enterprise Institute projected would raise the average household’s annual expenditures for gas and utilities by over \$1,000.²⁰⁸ Taylor’s preferred carbon tax is *nearly three times* larger than the rate proposed by Curbelo.

Even a \$20 per ton carbon tax would shrink the size of the economy by 0.8 percent, according to the right-leaning Tax Foundation, costing Americans 425,000 jobs and raising taxes by \$1.3 trillion over a decade.²⁰⁹

LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

The leadership of the Niskanen Center includes a mix of libertarians, moderates, and environmentalists.

Jerome “Jerry” Taylor is the founding president of Niskanen Center, a position he has held since 2015. Before his 2014 split with the Cato Institute, Taylor worked as the group’s director of natural resources studies, assistant editor of its magazine *Regulation*, senior fellow, and finally vice president. Prior to that, Taylor worked as director for energy and environment at the center-right group American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).²¹⁰ In 2018, Taylor received total compensation of \$233,464 as president of the Niskanen Center.²¹¹

Taylor’s brother, James, is a senior fellow for environment and energy policy at the center-right Heartland Institute, a group that is skeptical of global warming theory. James Taylor has described a “‘revenue-neutral’ carbon tax [as] a costly myth.”²¹²

Besides Taylor, Niskanen’s board of directors includes Kathryn Washburn, wife of the late William Niskanen; sex industry entrepreneur Phil Harvey; investment adviser Robert Litterman; Niskanen vice president Joseph Coon; vice president for research Will Wilkinson; vice president for government affairs Andrew Mills; director of immigration Kristen de Pena; director of development David Osborne; and chief counsel David Bookbinder.²¹³

Phil Harvey is a philanthropist, population control advocate, and founder of DKT International, a nonprofit that sells low-cost contraceptives to the Third World (mostly condoms, oral and injectable contraceptives, and IUDs). The group is heavily funded by the left-wing Gates, Hewlett, Packard, and WestWind Foundations and receives funding from the United Nations Population Fund.²¹⁴

Harvey is also president of Adam & Eve (formerly Population Planning Associates), a North Carolina-based “porn powerhouse” that sells sex toys, condoms, and erotic media and produces pornographic films. In 1970, he used revenues from



Jerry Taylor shares why he changed his mind about climate change and why he believes climate action and economic prosperity go hand-in-hand.

his sex industry retailer to form Population Services International, a major international population control advocacy group.²¹⁵ Harvey has donated at least \$50,000 to Niskanen.²¹⁶

Robert Litterman is a founding partner of Kepos Capital, a New York–based investment adviser. Prior to that, he worked for 23 years at Goldman Sachs, where he co-developed a notable asset allocation model. Litterman is a carbon tax advocate, arguing that carbon emitters should support carbon pricing policies in exchange for an end to carbon-related tort liability akin to the tobacco industry.²¹⁷ The Litterman Family Foundation has donated at least \$160,000 to the Niskanen Center, as well as the left-wing groups Planned Parenthood, Environmental Defence, World Wildlife Fund, and Resources for the Future. (Litterman is a board member for World Wildlife Fund, and Resources for the Future).²¹⁸

Niskanen chief counsel David Bookbinder is the former chief climate counsel to the Sierra Club, where he managed the group’s involvement in the 2007 U.S. Supreme Court case *Massachusetts v. EPA*. That case established the EPA’s authority to regulate “dangerous” greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act of 1970, even though the law itself had nothing to do with the climate.²¹⁹ *Massachusetts v. EPA* gave the EPA the power to regulate virtually all emissions in the United States.

Prior to that, he litigated numerous cases for increased regulation in California, “which effectively imposed a moratorium on new coal-fired power plants,” brags Niskanen’s website.²²⁰

Bookbinder, certainly no conservative, also claims he “led Sierra Club’s work on judicial nominations, including the filibusters” against the George W. Bush administration’s judicial appointments between 2003 and 2006.²²¹ He was also involved as Niskanen’s counsel in the 2018 climate-related lawsuit against ExxonMobil and Suncor.²²²

In addition, Bookbinder was a founding partner at the environmental consultancy Element VI Consulting, “where he offered advice and insights to organizations interested in U.S. climate policy.”²²³ Element VI Consulting has done work for the Niskanen Center, receiving \$151,691 for consulting

services in 2015, making it the center’s largest listed independent contractor.²²⁴

NISKANEN ADVISORY BOARD

The Niskanen Center has an advisory board of 25 members. Notable members include failed 2016 presidential candidate Evan McMullin and his running mate, Mindy Finn. Both are founders of the anti-Trump group Stand Up Republic, whose funders include many of the same left-wing foundations as the Niskanen Center: Pierre Omidyar’s Democracy Fund, the Hewlett Foundation, and Silicon Valley Community Foundation.²²⁵ In addition, Jerry Taylor is a board member for Stand Up Republic.²²⁶

George P. Shultz, another advisory board member, served as director of the Office of Management and Budget as well as secretary of Labor, Treasury, and State Departments in the Reagan administration. He is chair of the Shultz-Stephenson Task Force on Energy Policy at the center-right Hoover Institution, based in Stanford University in California. Shultz is the co-author of a 2013 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed alongside University of Chicago economics professor Gary Becker calling for a “revenue-neutral carbon tax.” Shultz is an advisory board member for the pro-carbon tax group Citizens’ Climate Lobby.

The full Niskanen advisory board is listed below:

- Mindy Finn, Stand Up Republic
- Evan McMullin, Stand Up Republic
- George P. Shulz, Hoover Institution
- David Frum, Senior Editor of *The Atlantic*
- Yuval Levin, Editor of *National Affairs*
- Reihan Salam, Executive Editor of *National Review*
- Eli Lehrer, R Street Institute
- Eliot Cohen, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Relations
- Anat Admati, Stanford University
- Brandon Arnold, National Taxpayers Union
- Radley Balko, journalist and author
- Tom Nichols, author

- Virginia Postrel, author and columnist
- Stuart Butler, Brookings Institution
- William A. Galston, Brookings Institution
- Benjamin Wittes, Brookings Institution
- John H. Cochrane, Hoover Institution
- Tyler Cowen, Mercatus Center
- J. Bradford Delong, University of California at Berkeley
- Daniel Drezner, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University
- Jacob T. Levy, McGill University
- Alexander McCobin, Conscious Capitalism
- Mark S. Weiner, Rutgers University
- Justin Wolfers, University of Michigan
- Matt Zwolinski, University of San Diego

2018 has been traced. It came overwhelmingly from left-wing foundations, including George Soros's Foundation to Promote Open Society, the Hopewell Fund (part of the "dark money" network managed by Arabella Advisors), the Hewlett Foundation, and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.²²⁹ Some of these grants bear descriptions which shed light on how the funds were meant to be used, including "climate change litigation" and "carbon tax advocacy."

Since 2016, Niskanen has received at least \$2.75 million from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, a major funder of eco-Right groups which also funds the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund and the anti-fossil fuel group Oil Change International.²³⁰ In 2017 alone, Hewlett funding accounted for almost a *quarter* of Niskanen's total annual revenues.²³¹

FUNDING

Most of Niskanen funding appears to come from the Left.

Donors to the Niskanen Center.

Niskanen's known funders are almost exclusively on the left, although it has received at least \$250,000 from the eco-Right group ClearPath.²²⁷ According to its own internal documents, Niskanen is overwhelmingly funded by left-wing donors, receiving grants from the Energy Foundation, Laura and John Arnold Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Linden Trust for Conservation, Claws Foundation, Alex C. Walker Educational and Charitable Foundation, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.²²⁸

Over \$6.5 million in grants to the Niskanen Center between 2015 and

Niskanen Center, a 501(c)(3)				
Area of Support / Funder	Date	Amount	Duration	Program Support
GENERAL SUPPORT				
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	Apr-18	\$400,000.00	1 year	General operating support
William B. Wiener Jr. Foundation	May-18	\$20,000.00	1 year	General operating support
Goldman Sonnenfeldt Foundation	May-18	\$25,000.00	1 year	General operating support
Phil Harvey	Jul-18	\$50,000.00	1 year	General operating support
Democracy Fund	Aug-18	\$100,000.00	1 year	General operating support
Litterman Family Foundation	Oct-18	\$100,000.00	1 year	General operating support
Facebook	Nov-18	\$25,000.00	1 year	General operating support and technology policy
Bob Jones	Dec-18	\$5,000.00	1 year	General operating support
KHD Charitable Fund	Dec-18	\$20,000.00	1 year	General operating support
Democracy Fund	Dec-18	\$15,000.00	1 year	Conference support
Goldman-Sonnenfeldt Foundation	Jan-19	\$50,000.00	1 year	General operating support
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	Jan-19	\$1,000,000.00	2 years	General operating support
William S and Ina Levine Foundation	Jan-19	\$25,000.00	1 year	General operating support
Lodestar Foundation	Jan-19	\$25,000.00	1 year	General operating support
Pivotal Foundation	Feb-19	\$25,000.00	1 year	General operating support
Lonsdale Family Philanthropic Fund	Feb-19	\$10,000.00	1 year	General operating support
Anonymous via New York Community Trust	Feb-19	\$100,000.00	1 year	General operating support
Anonymous	Feb-19	\$75,000.00	1 year	General operating support
CAPTURED ECONOMY PROJECT				
Google Foundation	Sep-18	\$100,000.00	1 year	Captured Economy project: intellectual property
Smith Richardson Foundation	Dec-18	\$50,000.00	1 year	Captured Economy project
CLIMATE POLICY, LITIGATION				
The Laura and John Arnold Foundation	Jun-17	\$600,000.00	3 years	Climate Policy, Eminent domain and pipeline litigation project
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	Nov-17	\$300,000.00	2 years	Climate Policy Department
Generation Foundation	Feb-18	\$200,000.00	2 years	Climate Policy Department
Rockefeller Brothers Fund	Feb-18	\$200,000.00	2 years	Eminent domain and pipeline litigation project
Sant Family Foundation	Apr-18	\$50,000.00	1 year	Climate Policy Department
Anonymous Foundation	Apr-18	\$100,000.00	1 year	Climate Policy Department
Tortuga Foundation	May-18	\$25,000.00	1 year	Eminent domain and pipeline litigation project
Park Foundation	Jun-18	\$40,000.00	1 year	Eminent domain and pipeline litigation project
Rockefeller Family Fund	Jun-18	\$50,000.00	1 year	Eminent domain and pipeline program
Energy Foundation	Jul-18	\$50,000.00	1 year	Eminent domain and pipeline litigation project
Linden Trust for Conservation	Aug-18	\$100,000.00	1 year	Climate Policy Department
Sall Family Foundation	Sep-18	\$200,000.00	1 year	Climate Policy Department
Alex C. Walker Foundation	Dec-18	\$15,000.00	1 year	Eminent domain pipeline project; Common law nuisance litigation project.
McQuown Trust	Jan-19	\$50,000.00	1 year	Climate litigation project
IMMIGRATION				
Open Philanthropy Project	Jan-18	\$400,000.00	2 years	Immigration Policy Department
Carnegie Corporation of New York	Feb-19	\$150,000.00	2 year	Immigration Policy Department
Carnegie Corporation of New York	Feb-19	\$150,000.00	2 year	Linda Chavez immigration policy work
OPEN SOCIETY PROJECT				
Linden Family Foundation	Mar-18	\$25,000.00	1 year	Open Society Project
Pritzker Innovation Fund	Jun-18	\$50,000.00	1 year	Open Society Project
Paul and Laura Jost	Jun-18	\$50,000.00	1 year	Open Society Project
Linden Family Foundation	Jan-19	\$25,000.00	1 year	Open Society Project
POVERTY AND WELFARE				
Rockefeller Foundation	Nov-18	\$250,000.00	1 year	Struggling Regions and Opportunity Zones Project
Niskanen Center for Public Policy, a 501(c)(4)				
Foundation/Donor	Date	Amount	Duration	Program Support
Open Society Foundation	Mar-17	\$500,000.00	2 years	Immigration and Foreign Policy Departments advocacy
Democracy Fund Voice	Mar-18	\$175,000.00	1 year	Open Society Project advocacy
Sall Family Foundation	Sep-18	\$200,000.00	1 year	Climate policy advocacy

Niskanen Center is overwhelmingly funded by left-wing donors, receiving over \$6.5 million in grants between 2015 and 2018.

The Democracy Fund—private foundation of eBay founder Pierre Omidyar, a major liberal donor—has granted at least \$290,000 to the Niskanen Center and Niskanen Center for Public Policy since 2018.²³²

Niskanen has received at least \$160,000 from the Litterman Family Foundation, the personal philanthropy of Niskanen Center board member Robert Litterman, an investment manager and carbon tax advocate who sits on the boards of the eco-Right group Climate Leadership Council, the World Wildlife Fund, and Resources for the Future—the last two are left-wing environmental groups that have received substantial donations from Litterman’s foundation.²³³ Litterman has also donated to the left-wing groups Environmental Defence, Climate Central, and Planned Parenthood.²³⁴

Donors to Niskanen Center for Public Policy.

The only known grants to the Niskanen Center for Public Policy, Niskanen’s 501(c)(4) lobbying arm, come from groups on the left. According to a 2019 donation history, the Center for Public Policy reported three grants from funding groups for advocacy:

- George Soros’s Open Society Foundations: \$500,000 in 2017 for “Immigration and Foreign Policy Departments advocacy.”
- Pierre Omidyar’s Democracy Fund Voice: \$175,000 in 2018 for “Open Society Project advocacy.”
- Sall Family Foundation: \$200,000 in 2018 for “Climate policy advocacy.”²³⁵

The left-wing [Environmental Defense Action Fund](#) reported a \$10,000 grant to the Niskanen Center for Public Policy in 2015.²³⁶ And in 2017, the [Sustainable Markets Foundation](#) granted \$54,000 to the Niskanen Center for Public Policy for “climate change.”²³⁷

The Sustainable Markets Foundation provides administrative support and grants to far-left environmentalist groups, including [350.org](#) and Frack Action, and is itself funded by left-wing foundations including the [Rockefeller Family Fund](#),



You can’t manage what you don’t measure.

[Tides Foundation](#), and [TomKat Charitable Trust](#).²³⁸

The group has been accused of being a “dark money” organization by the center-right *Washington Free Beacon*. In 2019, it was discovered that the Sustainable Markets Foundation had paid an LLC, [Our Next Economy](#), in independent contractor fees reportedly to support the [Climate Investigations Center \(CIC\)](#), a center-left environmental journalism group, instead of using grants.²³⁹

CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBLE ENERGY SOLUTIONS

Among the eco-Right, Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions (CRES) is notable as one of the few groups that doesn’t advocate for a carbon tax, but rather policies establishing federal *reporting* of greenhouse gas emissions—the first step in *regulating* them. As CRES puts it, “you can’t manage what you don’t measure.”²⁴⁰

While CRES has criticized carbon pricing schemes in France and Washington state, the group nevertheless supports policies “reducing carbon emissions.”²⁴¹ It supported American participation 2015 Paris Climate Accord under the Obama administration. And it lobbied against President Trump’s decision to withdraw from the agreement in 2017, running television advertisements and meeting with at least one White House aide to convince the president to maintain the global warming “treaty.”²⁴²

Structurally, CRES is a trifecta: three separate nonprofits operating under a single banner. CRES itself is a 501(c)(4) lobbying group, CRES Forum is its 501(c)(3) research and fundraising wing, and the CRES PAC aids sympathetic Republicans in reaching public office.

As might be expected, CRES receives substantial funding from the Left. The group was formed in 2013 with startup capital from the Tides Advocacy Fund (the action arm of the well-known Tides Foundation) and the Trust for Energy Innovation, a lesser-known environmental funder that also channels grants to the Sierra Club, League of Conservation Voters, and the lobbying wing of the Natural Resources Defense Council.²⁴³ The CRES Forum, its 501(c)(3) arm, has received at least one grant from the left-wing William & Flora Hewlett Foundation.

A number of prominent Republicans and conservatives are counted among CRES supporters. Former Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), a liberal Republican praised by some on the Left for championing President Obama's 2015 Clean Power Plan, has advised the group since July 2017.²⁴⁴

The CRES board is headed by James Dozier, a political consultant with a background in moderate Republican Party congressional politics and the gay rights group Log Cabin Republicans. Dozier and a handful of CRES allies and key staffers previously worked for the Gill Action Fund, a now-defunct 501(c)(4) lobbying group created by billionaire and gay rights advocate Tim Gill. Both the Gill Action Fund and its associated \$226 million Gill Foundation were key in the campaign to legalize gay marriage nationwide.²⁴⁵ Dozier also worked for the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, a nominally



James Dozier, head of the CRES board, has a background in moderate Republican Party congressional politics.

“nonpartisan” PAC that helps openly gay, lesbian, and transgender candidates win public office. In the 2016 and 2018 elections, Victory Fund money went exclusively to Democrats.²⁴⁶

CRES funds Republicans it believes are sympathetic to creating carbon reduction regulations. In the 2016 election, the group endorsed 29 Republican congressional candidates and spent \$2 million supporting them with direct mail, radio, digital, and television advertising.²⁴⁷ Much of its political spending is directed through the CRES PAC. The group has also spent millions of dollars lobbying for more environmental regulations and promotion of renewable energy sources.

GLOBAL WARMING LEGISLATION

Mixed Support for a Carbon Tax. CRES executive director Heather Reams has offered mixed assessments of carbon taxes. In 2017, Reams (then CRES’ managing director) called the Niskanen Center’s carbon tax and dividend plan “encouraging,” if unlikely to gain much Republican support.²⁴⁸

In December 2018, however, she penned an op-ed criticizing a failed carbon tax proposed in Washington State, the second time such a scheme had been rejected by local voters. Estimates show that the tax would have raised gas prices up to 59 cents a gallon by 2035 within Washington, which already has the third-highest gas prices in the country. They also estimate that the taxes would cost the average Washington household hundreds of thousands more a year and would have led to reduced economic growth in the state by 2020. Acknowledging climate change–related protests occurring in France and Australia, Reams stated:

Lessons learned from recent events in Paris, Sydney, and . . . in the state of Washington show that voters want action on climate change; however liberal attempts to use climate change to justify new channels for tax increases and expansion of the regulation state will face intense public backlash.²⁴⁹

Emissions Reporting Framework—a Green Trojan Horse. CRES may not officially support a carbon tax, but it advocates for the framework needed to tax carbon. The group wants a voluntary “nationwide system for carbon reporting” for companies and other greenhouse gas emitters, which it insists is “not a carbon tax or pricing proposal.”²⁵⁰

And strictly speaking, it’s not—though a skeptic might point out that in CRES’s own words “you can’t manage what you don’t measure.”²⁵¹ That’s important to remember because, although CRES falls short of pushing a carbon pricing scheme, the group endorses the basic assumptions a carbon tax group would be expected to make—that global warming is manmade and catastrophic. To that end, CRES uses the Left’s political vocabulary, referencing “greenhouse gases,” “carbon footprints,” “clean energy,” and “renewable energy”—emotionally evocative terms meant to sway people to support leftist goals through fear and supposedly scientific credentials.

CRES’s senior leadership has made unscientific claims, arguing that global warming has caused “more extreme weather events and more ice melt in recent years,” both factually incorrect statements.²⁵²

The group endorsed a 2019 bill that would regulate “super pollutants,” a terrifying term for hydrofluorocarbons—organic compounds used as refrigerants and in air conditioners. This is a throwback to the Left’s pre-global warming scare concerning supposed ozone depletion.²⁵³ The bill’s sponsors, Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Chris Murphy (D-CT), have hyperbolically claimed it “could cut the rate of sea level rise by 25 percent . . . prevent two million premature deaths each year, and avoid crop losses of over 30 million tons annually.”²⁵⁴

This is *politics*, not science.

CRES is clear that the purpose of its carbon reporting scheme is to ultimately reduce carbon dioxide emissions by “transforming carbon into a commodity.”²⁵⁵ What the group doesn’t say, however, is that even voluntary emissions reporting necessarily cedes regulatory power to the federal government, which is more likely to expand its regulatory scope than diminish it.



Voters want action on climate change; however liberal attempts to use climate change to justify new channels for tax increases and expansion of the regulation state will face intense public backlash.

As a result, this kind of framework—if created—would almost certainly pave the way for a carbon tax, cap-and-trade, or some other carbon reduction policy.

Climate Agreements and Legislation. CRES supported the 2015 Paris Climate Accords, an international climate

change “treaty” signed by President Obama. The Obama administration treated it as an executive agreement and never submitted it to the U.S. Senate for constitutional approval. The group ran last-minute television advertisements on cable news urging President Trump to keep the U.S. in the agreement after he announced his intent to withdraw in 2017, calling his decision “disappointing.”²⁵⁶

CRES also offered support for the Green Real Deal, a 2019 bill introduced by Florida Republican Reps. Matt Gaetz and Francis Rooney (a carbon tax supporter) as a Republican alternative to the far-left Green New Deal.²⁵⁷ Some conservatives have criticized the policy as a bureaucratic and expensive alternative to the bureaucratic and outrageously expensive Green New Deal since it expands the scope of government regulation and pushes renewable energy subsidies.²⁵⁸

Notably, the Green Real Deal would create a national framework for reporting carbon emissions. Unsurprisingly, it has received traction on the eco-Right, with support from the American Conservation Coalition, RepublicEn, the Conservative Energy Network, and former Reps. Bob Inglis (R-SC) and Carlos Curbelo (R-FL), both carbon tax advocates.²⁵⁹

LEADERSHIP

James Dozier. The three organizations that comprise CRES are headed by James Dozier, who is simultaneously the advocacy arm's board president, the fundraising wing's board chairman, and treasurer of the CRES PAC.²⁶⁰ (He was executive director of the CRES advocacy arm from its creation until early 2019, when he was succeeded by Heather Reams and joined the group's board of directors.)

Since 2012, Dozier has also worked as a principal for the Washington, DC, political consultancy Civitas Public Affairs Group.²⁶¹ Civitas is a registered lobbyist for CRES, which pays the company for "project management" and "advocacy management" services—nearly \$1.7 million between 2012 and 2017.²⁶²

And Dozier himself was paid a flat \$10,000 by CRES in the years when he worked as the group's executive director (board directors are typically barred from being paid, unless they're also an employee). According to its 2017 disclosure filing, "Dozier did work on CRES's behalf as an employee of Civitas [Public Affairs Group] for approximately 20-30 hours per week . . . [and] was paid a total of

\$90,000 by Civitas" over the tax period covered by the filing. He also reportedly "recused himself from the CRES board's consideration of this arrangement with Civitas."²⁶³

Before working at Civitas, Dozier was a Republican congressional staffer turned gay marriage activist. From 2009 to 2012, he was deputy political director of the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund, a nominally "nonpartisan" PAC that helps openly gay, lesbian, and transgender candidates win public office. In effect, this amounts to aiding Democrats: In the 2016 and 2018 elections, the Victory Fund exclusively funded Democrats.²⁶⁴ Prior to that, Dozier was a program officer for the Gill Action Fund, the now-defunct advocacy arm of the Gill Foundation, a grantmaking foundation that primarily funds LGBT issues with over \$226 million in assets and that paid out some \$13 million in grants in 2017.²⁶⁵ Gill Action Fund reportedly shut down in 2017 and hasn't filed with the IRS since 2014, though its reason for closing is unclear.²⁶⁶

Founders. Civitas Public Affairs Group is oddly well-connected with the Gill Action Fund, too. Its founders, Bill Smith and Patrick Guerriero, were once Gill Action's national political director and executive director, respectively.²⁶⁷ Notably, Smith reportedly worked for Karl Rove in an unknown capacity.²⁶⁸

Senior Officers. Another principal, Joanne Schwartz, was managing director for Gill Action. Other Civitas senior officers are alumni from the gay marriage campaigns of the early 2000s: national director Marc Solomon was national campaign director for Freedom to Marry and partner Katherine Grainger, former assistant counsel to Gov. Andrew Cuomo (NY-D), helped craft the state's 2011 Marriage Equality Act.²⁶⁹



CRES is notable as one of the few groups that doesn't advocate for a carbon tax, but rather policies establishing federal reporting of greenhouse gas emissions—the first step in regulating them.

That may complicate Civitas’s claim of “bipartisanship” since Guerrerio himself—former leader of the LGBT group Log Cabin Republicans and a failed candidate for Massachusetts lieutenant governor—announced he was leaving the Republican Party in 2010 to become an independent.²⁷⁰ Other Civitas staff are overwhelmingly products of the Left, coming from the Obama administration, the agitation group EMILY’s List, NARAL Pro-Choice America, Planned Parenthood Action Fund, the NAACP, and GLSEN, which pushes gay and lesbian education in K–12 schools.²⁷¹ The company also lists a number of left-wing clients on its website, including the Campaign Legal Center, Voto Latino, National Immigration Law Center, and the Center for Secure and Modern Elections, a project of the left-wing “dark money” network hosted by the liberal firm Arabella Advisors.²⁷²

Left-wing connections are fine for a private company, of course; but it *does* stretch CRES’ definition of itself as “conservative.” After all, the eco-Right group is all-but-controlled by James Dozier, a member of Civitas’ senior leadership, with his own ties to the professional Left.

FUNDING, LOBBYING, AND ELECTION SPENDING

CRES. CRES is a 501(c)(4) advocacy nonprofit, so it is not required to disclose its donors, only the amount of their donations. The advocacy arm is the main conduit for the organization’s lobbying activities. Since 2013, CRES has spent \$2.62 million on lobbying the federal government, according to disclosures filed with Congress. That money has overwhelmingly gone to two Republican-run, DC-based public affairs companies: Ballard Partners, a major corporate lobbying firm, and Crossroads Strategies, which services some large center-left nonprofits. Dozier’s firm, Civitas Public Affairs Group, is registered as a CRES lobbyist but has not received lobbying fees

from the group as of 2019.²⁷³

Naturally, most of CRES’ lobbying has focused environmental and energy issues, particularly bills promoting wind and solar energy, technology for directly capturing carbon dioxide and removing it from the environment (carbon capture), and “green” energy jobs.²⁷⁴

CRES’s approximate lobbying expenditures²⁷⁵ by year were:

- 2019: \$330,000
- 2018: \$430,000
- 2017: \$580,000
- 2016: \$400,000
- 2015: \$240,000
- 2014: \$290,000
- 2013: \$230,000

CRES Forum. CRES Forum is the group’s 501(c)(3) “research” arm. Data from the service FoundationSearch shows \$1,444,350 in grants²⁷⁶ to CRES Forum from four donor-advised fund providers and a left-of-center foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, between 2015 and 2017:

- Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund: \$925,000 (2017)
- Schwab Charitable Gift Fund: \$269,350 (2017)
- Foundation for the Carolinas: \$50,000 (2015)
- William & Flora Hewlett Foundation: \$200,000 (2017)

CRES PAC. CRES maintains a political action committee (PAC) also named Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions. The PAC was established in August 2016; James Dozier is the PAC’s treasurer.²⁷⁷

The CRES PAC is technically a “Carey Committee,” a hybrid PAC and super PAC—meaning that it isn’t connected with a specific candidate (unlike a traditional PAC) yet may make contributions to a specific candidate’s own PAC and may also spend money on independent expenditures like a super PAC. Carey committees have two separate bank accounts, one for the traditional PAC spending and the other for super PAC independent expenditures. (“Independent expenditures” refers to spending by super PACs and other groups *not associated* with any specific candidate *in support of* specific candidates. This kind of spending is reported to but not limited by the Federal Election Commission.)²⁷⁸

In the 2016 election, the CRES PAC raised almost \$24,000 and spent just over \$6,000. It gave direct contributions to Rep. John Faso (R-NY), who won reelection, and Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA), who also won reelection.²⁷⁹ Interestingly, Bob Inglis—a former U.S. representative and member of the eco-Right—donated \$250 to the group in 2016.²⁸⁰

In the 2018 midterm election, the CRES PAC raised just over \$14,000 and spent almost \$23,000. It gave direct contributions²⁸¹ to:

- Rep. Carlos Curbelo* (R-FL): \$8,000
- Rep. Ryan Costello* (R-PA): \$1,000
- Rep. Mia Love (R-UT): \$1,000
- Rep. Michael Waltz (R-FL): \$1,000
- Rep. William Timmons (R-SC): \$500
- Rep. Dusty Johnson (R-SD): \$500
- Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME): \$1,500
- Sen. Jeff Flake (R-AZ): \$1,000

**Curbelo sponsored a carbon tax bill in 2018. After leaving office in 2018, Costello became a government affairs consultant and manages the Climate Leadership Council, a pro-carbon tax group.*

REPUBLICEN

RepublicEn isn’t an independent think tank or activist group, but a project of the Center for Climate Change Communication at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, created in 2012. This has implications for tracking the group, since all its funding is *really* just funding to the university program—a line item under a line item in an academic budget. Yet, RepublicEn is known to have received millions of dollars from left-wing foundations.

Nevertheless, RepublicEn (the “En” reportedly stands for Energy, Enterprise, Environment) deserves scrutiny for the prominence of its founder and mastermind: Bob Inglis, a Republican former congressman who lost his seat to a fellow Republican in the 2010 Tea Party wave largely due to his support for the Left’s theory of catastrophic manmade global warming. Since then, Inglis has become a champion of the eco-Right and a scion of the eco-Left, which holds him up as an apologist for environmentalism. Inglis’s “martyrdom” has earned him glowing coverage by left-wing media as the “conservative who believes that climate change is real.”²⁸² In fact, the group proudly calls itself “the EcoRight.”

“For many conservatives,” Inglis later complained about his congressional defeat, support for environmentalism “became the marker that you had crossed to Satan’s side—that you had left God and gone to Satan’s side on climate change.”²⁸³

RepublicEn is Inglis’s carbon tax advocacy group. As such, it is connected with the left-wing Citizens’ Climate Lobby (CCL), where Inglis is an advisory board member. The group supported Rep. Carlos Curbelo’s (R-FL) failed 2018 carbon tax bill.²⁸⁴ Despite its conservative credentials, many of RepublicEn’s staffers have left-wing background, working at think tanks funded by the Tides and Packard Foundations.

SUPPORT FOR GLOBAL WARMING AND CARBON TAXES

Center for Climate Change Communication.

RepublicEn's parent, the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication, is effectively an academic advocacy group for left-wing environmental policies. It has published reports advancing the conspiracy theory that the fossil fuel industry "deliberately misled Americans [about] the reality of human-caused climate change for decades" and purportedly showing that voters in swing states support anti-fossil fuel policies.²⁸⁵

This allegedly serious academic institution uses many unscientific arguments to bolster its claims, claiming that "climate deniers" are "attacking the scientific consensus of climate change." It has even cited the widely debunked "97 percent consensus" figure that supposedly evidences widespread scientific support for global warming theory.²⁸⁶ The conspiracy theory that ExxonMobil defrauded the general public about global warming was legally debunked in a 2019 lawsuit by the New York state Attorney General's office when the judge ruled the claim "baseless."²⁸⁷

RepublicEn. RepublicEn's main goal seems to be convincing Republicans to support carbon taxes.

Most of the group's tax arguments follow those of other carbon tax supporters: Carbon taxes are

revenue neutral, more effective than any alternative proposed by the Left, and fiscally conservative.

RepublicEn's position on the tax rate it would prefer fluctuates. In its advocacy it has cited a report by the left-wing group Resources for the Future that examines a \$25 per metric ton carbon tax, although RepublicEn admits that a carbon tax would raise electricity costs on everyday Americans.²⁸⁸ In February 2020, Inglis spoke at a College Republicans event on a \$15 per ton carbon tax (rising to \$100 per ton by 2050), calling it "revenue-neutral" in part because it would "increase a polluter's cost of production to reflect the costs to the environment, or to internalize the polluter's negative externalities."²⁸⁹

Inglis has argued that it would take fear of a looming climate "crisis" to spur the public into backing a carbon tax: "What I learned from 12 years in Congress," he told the media, "is that leadership aimed at consensus, plus a crisis, equals change."²⁹⁰

But the group relies on faulty claims. RepublicEn has said that federal subsidies have made oil and gas "artificially cheap, obstructing the market and preventing a level playing field" (presumably against renewables). Without such subsidies, the group claims that "consumers and producers would be incentivized to switch, quickly, to cleaner energy alternatives."²⁹¹



Bob Inglis, founder of republicEn, is a Republican former congressman who lost his seat largely due to his support for the Left's theory of catastrophic manmade global warming. He has since become a champion of the eco-Right.

But that's just silly. For one thing, the bulk so-called subsidies to oil and gas companies are actually *tax breaks*—not cash payments—for things like capital losses on newly drilled wells and to encourage drillers to stay in the U.S. instead of going abroad. Many of those tax breaks come from state governments, not the federal government. In other words, it's a public incentive for companies to invest capital and try to turn a profit, a common practice in the U.S. and not corporate welfare as claimed by many on the Left.

The underlying liberal argument is that a subsidy is government allowing a person or company to keep more of what it already owns and produces. Conservatives typically take an opposite view of property rights.

Oil and gas are cheap because they're abundant resources—thanks to the drillers who have found clever ways to increase production and lower costs. Ironically, RepublicEn's market-warping accusation better fits renewables, which *are* subsidized by the government. Besides tax credits (which are subsidies according to RepublicEn and liberals) totaling roughly \$5.6 billion in 2016, renewables also received roughly \$1 billion in direct payments that same year.²⁹² The 2015 omnibus spending bill passed by Congress diverted over \$14 billion to “green” energy over seven years—there was no such equivalent for oil and gas.²⁹³ The obvious goal here is to artificially drive down the cost of electricity generated by wind and solar sources through taxpayer subsidies in order to compete with cheap oil and gas—the exact opposite of RepublicEn's claim.

RepublicEn does not endorse legislation. However, it has praised the Climate Leadership Council's carbon tax and dividend plan. In 2018, RepublicEn backed Rep. Carlos Curbelo's (R-FL) MARKET CHOICE Act, which would have imposed a carbon tax. In 2019, it also supported the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act, which included a carbon tax, co-sponsored by Reps. Francis Rooney (R-FL), Ted Deutch (D-FL), and five other House Democrats.²⁹⁴



RepublicEn, a project of the Center for Climate Change Communication at George Mason University, is known to have received millions of dollars from left-wing foundations.

BOB INGLIS

Bob Inglis is the founder and executive director of RepublicEn. Inglis, a former South Carolina congressman, is probably best known for his embarrassing defeat in his district's 2010 Republican primary, when the six-term sitting member lost 27 percent to 39 percent to Tea Party upstart Trey Gowdy.²⁹⁵

According to the *New York Times*, Inglis partly attributed his defeat to a handful of congressional votes—such as opposing President George W. Bush's troop surge in Iraq—but largely laid the blame on his district's opposition to his left-wing view of global warming. “The most enduring heresy was just saying that climate change was real,” he said. “That was the one that was most damaging, I'm convinced.”

Critically, Inglis sponsored a carbon tax bill in 2009 that would have levied a \$15 per metric ton tax, rising to \$100 per ton by 2040 (H.R. 2380, the Raise Wages, Cut Carbon Act).²⁹⁶ For that, the *Times* hailed him as the House of Representatives' “most outspoken Republican climate believer.”²⁹⁷

“For many conservatives, it became the marker that you had crossed to Satan’s side—that you had left God and gone to Satan’s side on climate change,” he added, “because many evangelical Christians in our district would say that it’s up to God to determine the length of Earth, and therefore, you are invading the province of God.”

Since leaving office, Inglis has built a reputation as the Left’s favorite Republican when it comes to the climate. He regularly gives interviews to global warming groups, providing liberal media outlets with quips that bash conservative climate skepticism. Headlines hail his “conservative climate change” and refer to him as “a Republican believer in climate change,” the man who “takes a stand on climate change,” and the “conservative who believes that climate change is real.”²⁹⁸ Inglis has called the years since he lost reelection the “decade of disastrous disputation” because of the Republican Party’s refusal to endorse devastating environmental legislation.²⁹⁹

“These EcoRight allies of ours are messaging on the right and helping conservatives to hear it in our own language,” he’s said, “because climate change is basically a conversation started by the left in the language of the left.” In fact, a carbon tax “is supported by actual conservatives,” he told an audience in early 2020. “But my party is not being controlled by actual conservatives. It’s being controlled by populist nationalists, which are different than conservatives.”³⁰⁰

If it isn’t clear, Inglis is not a friend of most serious conservatives, and he isn’t well-liked by the far-Left, either. In March 2019, he joined socialist Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) in an MSNBC townhall, where he agreed with other speakers that the Tea Party movement was an “effective movement” for “delay[ing] action on climate change.” Notably, he was booed by a very left-wing audience when he suggested that Congress should deal with climate change first and in a moderate way rather than focusing on health care reform. An audience member even called him a “moron” after he praised the goals of the far-left Green New Deal but warned it couldn’t be done in a single Congress.

Elsewhere Inglis has said he’s “very grateful for the sentiment” behind the Green New Deal but thinks the idea itself is “overwrought,” pointing out that it’s entirely partisan and not intended to garner Republican support.³⁰¹

Inglis is well-connected to the eco-Right. He’s an advisory board member for the left-wing carbon tax group Citizens’ Climate Lobby and a board member for the right-leaning R Street Institute. Notably, he’s also a board member for Defending Democracy Together, a right-leaning group created by Bill Kristol and other liberal Republicans to host The Bulwark, a NeverTrump opinion website.

Notably, he compared South Carolina’s decision not to hold a presidential primary in 2020, with President Trump running nearly undisputed for reelection, with the Nazis’ fake elections in the Third Reich.³⁰²

FUNDING

Funding for RepublicEn has largely come from left-wing foundations. It’s virtually impossible to track all of the funding to RepublicEn, since grants for the project go to George Mason University and are usually only vaguely defined. The university also accepts online donations for RepublicEn. Known grants³⁰³ to the project since its founding in 2012 include:

- Skoll Global Threats Fund: \$150,000
- Town Creek Foundation: \$698,663
- Linden Trust for Conservation: \$15,000

It’s also likely that many huge grants to the university with the description “mitigate climate change” were intended for RepublicEn and similar projects (though that is uncertain). Using that data³⁰⁴ since 2012 also shows:

- Sea Change Foundation: \$2.35 million
- Energy Foundation: \$325,000
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: \$74,818

AMERICAN CONSERVATION COALITION

The American Conservation Coalition (ACC) is one of the top eco-Right groups preaching environmentalism to conservative millennials. At the helm of ACC is Benjamin “Benji” Backer, a 21-year-old undergraduate student and “conservative environmentalist” who founded ACC as a college freshman.³⁰⁵

Few of ACC’s donors are known, but ACC has received grants from at least two liberal groups. In 2018, it received \$10,000 from the National Audubon Society—a leftist group with which it has a strangely close connection. ACC Campus, its 501(c)(3) arm, received a \$100,000 grant over two years from the left-wing Hewlett Foundation.³⁰⁶ Even split in two, that grant represents one-third of the \$149,000 that ACC Campus reported in total contributions in 2018.³⁰⁷

ACC is entirely millennial-run, at least nominally. The group’s website, opaque employee pay structure, lobbying efforts, and fundraising burst between its creation in 2017 and most recent IRS filing in 2018 strongly suggest outside guidance from professional activists. The organization is run by volunteers and didn’t pay any staffers in 2017 or 2018.³⁰⁸ Nevertheless, as of December 2019 the organization’s website had multiple open positions requesting candidates’ salary ranges.³⁰⁹

While who those activists are isn’t clear, ACC is connected to a prominent member of the eco-Right: Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions (CRES), whose executive director, Heather Reams, is an ACC board member. CRES and ACC have cooperated on at least one joint project, a July 2019 poll that purports to show that climate change is a major issue among Republicans, which the groups distributed to lawmakers over a multi-month advocacy campaign in late 2019.³¹⁰ Many of ACC’s projects focus on the theme of Republicans losing future electoral support by pointing to the millennial bloc’s high level of interest in environmentalism. It tries to use these statistics to pressure the Republican Party into adopting a global warming agenda or else lose future voters to the Democratic Party. Backer himself has argued that “the Republican party has refused to accept the

severity of most environmental issues, including climate change.”³¹¹

To this end, ACC promotes a “conservative” approach to global warming on college campuses, typically among College Republicans. It runs a Clean Energy Coalition—essentially an open letter from 30 College Republican state chairs—calling on the Republican Party to endorse “free-market environmentalism” so that “conservative values are not lost in the next generation and generations to come.”³¹²



“Grab bag” strategy—snatching policies from the Left and Right in the hope of netting “strong support from both Republicans and Democrats.”

ACC endorsed pro-global warming Republicans in Congress and state legislatures for reelection in 2018.³¹³ It isn’t clear how effective ACC has been at advancing the global warming narrative among Republicans, but the group made inroads into the Trump administration. In July 2019, for instance, ACC signed a memorandum of understanding with the Trump Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to “formalize a first-time nonbinding agreement of enhanced cooperation” between the groups to aid ACC’s environmental education efforts.³¹⁴

ACC itself has received modest support from a handful of Republican members of Congress, such as Rep. Cathy McMorris-Rodgers (R-WA), who co-authored a December 2019 Fox.com op-ed with Backer asserting, “The climate is changing. Humans and global industrial activity are contributing.”³¹⁵

Curiously, ACC has removed its list of endorsements from its website, though it’s unclear

why. An archived version of that webpage shows endorsements by:

- Niskanen Center president Jerry Taylor (a libertarian turned liberal) cheering ACC's efforts to "change the narrative when it comes to conservatives and the environment";
- Michael Dorsey, an ex-Obama administration staffer and co-founder of the far-left Sunrise Movement, the principal activist group behind the Green New Deal;
- Bob Inglis, a former liberal Republican congressman who lost his seat in 2010 in large part due to his strong belief in global warming;
- ClearPath Foundation founder Jay Faison;
- Former Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson (R), a senior fellow at the center-left (and misleadingly named) Bipartisan Policy Center; and
- Former New Jersey Gov. Christine Todd Whitman (R).³¹⁶

Also notable is that ACC has deleted its founding coalition from its website, all of which included left-wing or eco-Right groups. It no longer claims to be part of any such coalition. The coalition included:

- Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions (CRES)
- ConservAmerica
- R Street Institute
- Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund
- Conservative Energy Network
- Conservatives for Environmental Reform
- California Water Alliance
- Citizens' Climate Lobby³¹⁷

Notably, the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund is the advocacy wing of the Ohio Environmental Council, the state affiliates of the left-wing League of Conservation Voters.

At its founding, ACC flirted with carbon pricing schemes before ultimately coming out against a carbon tax in an August 2019 op-ed.³¹⁸ Not

all of the organization's policies are faulty, of course, particularly in forest management and conservation, issues that conservatives have supported for a century or more. ACC is also highly critical of "radical environmentalists" and the Green New Deal.³¹⁹



The American Conservation Coalition (ACC) is one of the top eco-Right groups preaching environmentalism to conservative millennials.

A strong degree of naivety characterizes many of ACC's climate proposals, which are almost invariably accompanied by paeans for bipartisan support that fail to register the undercurrents of wealth redistribution, restriction of individual liberties, and authoritarianism present in the debate over global warming. For example, the group has called for an "all-of-the-above" approach to generating energy that incorporates fossil fuels and renewables, which would be better read as a "grab bag" strategy—snatching policies from the Left and Right in the hope of netting "strong support from both Republicans and Democrats."³²⁰

GLOBAL WARMING LEGISLATION

Carbon Tax Ambivalence. ACC's position on a carbon tax has shifted from tepid endorsement in 2017 to hedging during the 2018 midterm election to flat rejection in 2019.

An archived snapshot of the group's website from September 2017 reveals a part of ACC's platform calling for a "carbon pricing policy." The text was later removed.

Experts agree: climate change is occurring, and human actions contribute to it in a significant and measurable way. ACC is open to all proposals focused on curbing the effects of climate change.

There is a need to take action with a measure such as a carbon pricing policy that is noninvasive, fair for both businesses and citizens, and cuts costly and ineffective regulations. [emphasis added]³²¹

A year later, ACC clarified its position in a blog post entitled, "Let's Stay Away from the Carbon Tax Debate." The post was written in response to Rep. Carlos Curbelo's (R-FL) carbon tax (the 2018 MARKET CHOICE Act) and the bill's flat rejection by House Republicans, who passed a resolution opposing all carbon tax legislation. In the piece, ACC declined to take a side on carbon pricing policies, instead emphasizing bipartisan interest in "issues such as innovation in clean energy and growth in its use."³²²

A year after that, ACC refined its position on carbon pricing policies with a *Washington Times* op-ed calling on legislators to "ditch the carbon

tax and embrace less divisive climate change solutions." Laudably, ACC criticized carbon taxes as a supposedly "middle-of-the-road option" that has been in existence for three decades yet never gained much public support:

In an attempt to gain conservative support, there have been recent efforts to brand carbon pricing as a "free market" solution. However, regardless of how you package it, carbon pricing is not a free-market solution, as its very essence is the addition of regulation and extra costs in the market. While the policy is market-based, it's still a form of government intervention.³²³

In October 2019, ACC criticized Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick's (R-PA) 2019 MARKET CHOICE Act (a successor to the 2018 Curbelo carbon tax), calling the carbon tax "doomed legislation." The group pointed out that Rep. Fitzpatrick's own state, Pennsylvania, "relies heavily on natural gas production"—one of the targets of any carbon tax.³²⁴ The group has rightly credited the expanded use of natural gas with reductions in the country's carbon dioxide output.

Expensive and Ineffective Policies. ACC's opposition to carbon taxes deserves recognition, but its global warming "solutions" share the same problem as those proposed by other eco-Right groups opposed to a carbon tax or cap-and-trade system: They accept the Left's extreme assumptions about climate change but refuse to provide equally extreme answers. In fact, ACC's proposals are a good way to make Americans' electricity much more expensive without touching the climate.

At the heart of ACC's climate strategy is massive federal subsidies for new and unreliable



Our View: Carbon Emissions

Experts agree: climate change is occurring, and human actions contribute to it in a significant and measurable way. ACC is open to all proposals focused on curbing the effects of climate change. The United States has convincing moral and financial incentives to invest in renewable and alternative energy and curb its carbon footprint. Government must implement regulations in a fiscally responsible manner, acknowledging the utility of the free market in curbing carbon emissions.

There is a need to take action with a measure such as a carbon pricing policy that is noninvasive, fair for both businesses and citizens, and cuts costly and ineffective regulations.

An archived snapshot of the group's website from September 2017 reveals a part of ACC's platform calling for a "carbon pricing policy." The text was later removed.

technologies, particularly lithium batteries and carbon capture and storage.

We've already explained how resource-intensive lithium batteries are. Carbon capture and storage is a relatively new technology used to contain much of the CO₂ emitted when coal and other carbon-based fuels are burned, mostly during industrial production. The carbon dioxide is then piped elsewhere and pressure-injected into pockets deep underground, often in former oilfields, where the gas slowly dissolves into surrounding rocks and water until it "locks" into geological formations.³²⁵ Advocates support carbon capture technology because it can reduce the amount CO₂ in the atmosphere rather than simply lowering the amount of CO₂ emitted, and they have suggested the EPA mandate its use in key energy industries, particularly coal production.

Critics such as Competitive Enterprise Institute senior fellow Marlo Lewis Jr. argue that carbon capture technology is "too costly and geographically limited" for nationwide standards and would raise consumer electricity prices. Critics also dispute the claim that carbon capture technology would reduce emissions, pointing to analysis indicating that coal plants using carbon capture techniques emitted "more CO₂ than a conventional coal power plant."³²⁶

More importantly, neither of these technologies is sufficient to save the planet in the doomsday scenario imagined by many on the Left and so won't garner the bipartisan support ACC envisions. In fact, bipartisanship has little to do with it. This goes back to the wrongheaded approach of the eco-Right: If you're going to accept the problem as the Left defines it, you'll have to accept the *solutions* as defined by the Left.

Lobbying and Legislative Support. ACC is too small to do much lobbying, but it has supported a number of environmental regulation bills, mainly related to renewable energy storage and carbon capture technology.

The group supported the 2019 USE IT Act (H.R. 1166), a largely Democratic-backed bill that would have awarded federal funding for carbon capture

research, costing some \$85 million, according to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO).³²⁷

ACC also backed the 2019 Better Energy Storage Technology (BEST) Act (S. 1602) introduced by Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) and mostly co-sponsored by Senate Democrats.³²⁸ The bill would have provided huge federal funding for battery research to store electricity generated via renewables—nearly \$1 billion over 2020–2024, and another \$405 million



If you're going to accept the problem as the Left defines it, you'll have to accept the solutions as defined by the Left.

after 2024. To put that in perspective, according to the CBO, Congress appropriated just \$46 million to such research in 2019.³²⁹

In December 2019, ACC hired Natural Resource Results LLC, a DC-based lobby shop that has also lobbied for the Nature Conservancy, the "dark money" group New Venture Fund (part of the \$600 million lobbying empire run by DC consultancy Arabella Advisors), and Trout Unlimited and Ducks Unlimited (fronts for global warming policies disguised as outdoor sports groups).³³⁰ According to lobbying filings with the U.S. Congress, it's the first and only lobbying firm hired by ACC (as of December 2019).³³¹

LEADERSHIP AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As a youth-oriented organization, ACC's leadership consists of college-age activists. Benjamin "Benji" Backer, ACC's president, is (at the time of writing) a college senior.³³² ACC's board of directors, however, speaks to the group's ties to the professional eco-Right.

The Board. Heather Reams is executive director of Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions (CRES), an eco-Right advocacy group that has produced at least one poll in conjunction with ACC.

Brent Fewell is founder of Earth & Water Law Group, an environmental law firm. Fewell was previously principal deputy assistant administrator in the EPA Office of Water in the George W. Bush administration.³³³

Todd Myers is director of the Center for the Environment at the Washington Policy Center, a right-leaning think tank based in Washington State.³³⁴

Holly Fretwell is the director of research and a research fellow for the Property and Environment Research Center, a center-right conservationist think tank based in Montana. She is also a former economics professor.³³⁵

James “Jim” Connaughton is president and CEO of Nautilus Data Technologies, a for-profit firm that develops waterborne data centers. Connaughton is the former chairman of the George W. Bush administration’s White House Council on Environmental Quality (2001–2009). He later directed environmental and energy policy for the natural gas company Constellation, a subsidiary of the oil and natural gas producer Exelon.³³⁶ He is also an adviser to the eco-Right group ClearPath Foundation.³³⁷

Board of Advisors. ACC’s advisory board consisted of 33 individuals as of April 2020.³³⁸ Notable members include:

- Former Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-FL), whose carbon tax bill in 2018 was criticized by ACC.
- Former U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton (R-WA), a liberal Republican who called for the impeachment of President Donald Trump in November 2019.³³⁹
- Former Rep. Bob Dold (R-IL), a gun control advocate.³⁴⁰
- Collin O’Mara, president of the left-wing environmentalist group National Wildlife Federation.

- David Yarnold, president and CEO of the center-left National Audubon Society.
- Jason Grumet, founder and president of the left-of-center Bipartisan Policy Center.
- Eli Lehrer, president of the right-leaning R Street Institute, an eco-Right group and carbon tax supporter.
- Paul Bodnar, managing director of the left-wing environmentalist think tank Rocky Mountain Institute.
- Andreas Merkl, former president of the left-wing group Ocean Conservancy.
- John Seydel, sustainability director for the City of Atlanta, Georgia, and a former campaign staffer for two Colorado Democrats, Gov. John Hickenlooper and Sen. Mark Udall. As an environmental activist, Seydel was reportedly tasked by Atlanta as part of his job to craft “a strategy for how the city will meet its 100 percent renewable energy goal.” He’s also a supporter of Fossil Free Stanford, a student movement demanding Stanford University “fully divest from fossil years within five years” of 2018.³⁴¹

But an archived snapshot of the board from September 14, 2017, reveals a handful of members no longer listed on ACC’s website. One of them, Rob Sisson, is executive director of eco-Right group ConservAmerica.

Also absent is Sarah Hunt, former general counsel and director of state affairs to the eco-Right group Niskanen Center. She now co-manages the liberal Joseph Rainey Center for Public Policy, a self-described “cross-partisan” think tank she co-founded with Bishop Garrison, an former adviser to the Obama administration.³⁴² She previously ran the Energy Innovation Project for the conservative ALEC, which was reportedly created with funding from the electric car manufacturer Tesla. Hunt is a carbon tax supporter, calling it “a more elegant, cost-efficient way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”³⁴³ According to ACC’s IRS application for recognition of tax-exempt status, Hunt was a founding board member for the 501(c)(3) wing, ACC Campus.³⁴⁴

Board of Advisors

Our Board of Advisors is continually growing, check back for additional updates as we add more members.



Sarah Hunt
Director, ALEC Center for Innovation



Rob Sisson
Executive Director, ConservAmerica



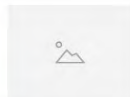
Slade Gorton
Former US Senator (R-WA)



John R. Seydel III
Sustainability Director, City of Atlanta



Kurt Zellers
Co-Founder, MZA+ Co



An archived snapshot of the board reveals a handful of members no longer listed on ACC's website, including ConservAmerica's Rob Sisson and Niskanen Center's Sarah Hunt.

FUNDING

The American Conservation Coalition and its 501(c)(3) arm, ACC Campus, are so new that little information is available about their funders.

In 2018, ACC reported total revenues of \$224,000 and total expenditures of \$130,000, including grants paid totaling \$6,500.³⁴⁵ ACC Campus reported 2018 revenues of \$149,000 and total expenditures of \$41,000.³⁴⁶

Few of ACC's donors are known, though a redacted copy of the group's 2018 filing obtained by the Capital Research Center shows donations of \$90,000, \$60,000, \$50,000, and \$5,000.³⁴⁷

In 2018, the left-wing National Audubon Society donated \$10,000 to ACC.³⁴⁸ ACC is also closely connected with the group: According to ACC's application to the IRS for recognition of tax-exempt status, all of its assets are to be distributed "exclusively to National Audubon Society" in the event that ACC is dissolved.³⁴⁹ David Yarnold, president and founder of the National Audubon Society, is a member of ACC's advisory board.³⁵⁰

While ACC claims to be conservative, the National Audubon Society does not. The group has sued the Trump administration for allegedly "stripping vital protections for migratory birds" and accused it of "hand[ing] industry a blank check for bird deaths."³⁵¹ The

National Audubon Society has criticized the Trump administration for withdrawing from the Paris Climate Accords, criticized President Trump's decision to undo President Obama's Clean Power Plan as "shortsighted and reckless," and argued for the unfounded and scientifically challenged claim that "more carbon in the air means worse natural disasters."³⁵²

In 2018, the left-wing Hewlett Foundation awarded a \$100,000 grant (paid out over two years) to ACC Campus, ACC's 501(c)(3) arm.³⁵³ Hewlett's money probably accounts for one redacted donation of \$50,000 made to ACC Campus that year. Another grant for \$85,000, however, remains a mystery.³⁵⁴

THE CLEARPATH NETWORK

ClearPath is the brainchild of Jay Faison, a wealthy North Carolina entrepreneur and Republican who has made climate change activism his retirement hobby. He formed ClearPath in 2014 with a huge \$166 million endowment.³⁵⁵ While the group shuns carbon taxes and other carbon pricing schemes, it aims to convince conservatives and congressional Republicans to adopt the Left's global warming framework and support "free market," pro-renewable energy policies. "Republicans think this [global warming] is a Democratic conspiracy to create a bigger government," Faison has said, but "there's good evidence that is not the case."³⁵⁶

ClearPath isn't a single organization, but a network comprised of three nonprofits and a super PAC (though only two of the nonprofits are particularly active). This makes it an unusual take on the typical trifecta approach seen among other advocacy groups: a 501(c)(3) fundraising arm, a 501(c)(4) lobbying arm, and a PAC/super PAC for campaign spending.

The network is exclusively interested in Republicans. Faison, a Republican, has told the press ClearPath will not align itself with Democrats, even if they support ClearPath's agenda. "We will not work against Republicans," he's said.³⁵⁷ To that end, the ClearPath super PAC spent millions of dollars in the 2016 and 2018 elections supporting Republicans, particularly those supportive of global warming legislation, like former Reps. Carlos Curbelo (R-FL) and Ryan Costello (R-PA).³⁵⁸

ClearPath's lobbying wing has spent millions of dollars lobbying in support of federal aid to carbon capture technology and lithium batteries for storing electricity generated by renewables. It also supports hydropower, nuclear power, and natural gas production through fracking.³⁵⁹

MIXED RECEPTION FROM THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT

ClearPath founder Jay Faison is the son of North Carolina real estate developers and a former global

warming skeptic. As he puts it, he "loved the outdoors but disliked 'crazy environmentalists,'" particularly "the overreach of the government stopping good real estate deals in the name of the environment." In 2000, his wife "dragged" him to a global warming speech that changed his mind, launching Faison into climate change activism.³⁶⁰

A tech entrepreneur, Faison made his fortune with a chain of Blockbuster Video stores. Later he purchased SnapAV, a small audio-visual equipment company, and grew it into a highly successful enterprise (his net worth in 2013 was \$224 million). In 2013, Faison sold his majority stake in SnapAV for \$175 million and used most of the proceeds to form the ClearPath Foundation, the network's 501(c)(3) wing, the following year. Despite its name, ClearPath is a public charity and *not* a private foundation.³⁶¹

According to ClearPath's initial IRS filing, Faison moved \$165.6 million to the ClearPath Foundation, part of it through the Foundation for the Carolinas—a donor-advised fund (DAF) provider that supports other eco-Right groups and itself receives grants from the leftist Energy Foundation, Hewlett Foundation, and George Soros's Foundation to Promote Open Society.³⁶² The huge sum has acted like an endowment, enabling ClearPath to operate on its cash reserves and income from investments in the years since then.

He also directed another \$10 million to ClearPath Action Fund for Conservative Clean Energy (at its launch, called "America Leads"), the network's advocacy arm, to lobby for pro-renewable legislation.³⁶³

(Green) Wolves in Sheep's Clothing?

Unsurprisingly, Faison's campaign has met with strong skepticism from the Right and mixed praise from the Left. ClearPath and Faison have been called "wolves in sheep's clothing" by some conservatives.³⁶⁴ Myron Ebell, director of the Center for Energy and Environment at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, has called them "infiltrators trying to subvert ALEC." The American Legislative Exchange Council brings together



Jay Faison, ClearPath Founder, shuns carbon taxes and other carbon pricing schemes. He aims to convince conservatives and congressional Republicans to adopt the Left's global warming framework and support "free market, pro-renewable energy policies."

many conservative and libertarian local and state legislators with policy writers to work on crafting model legislation.³⁶⁵

At the group's launch, *The Hill*, a left-leaning news website, reported skepticism from another Republican strategist and energy lobbyist, who said that Faison "has a lot more history with the Environmental Defense Fund," a left-wing environmentalist group, "than he does with Republicans."³⁶⁶

In 2012, Faison was an advisory board member for the Environmental Defense Action Fund, the lobbying wing of the Environmental Defense Fund, an eco-behemoth that was a strong supporter of President Obama's energy policies.³⁶⁷ He also served on the board of EcoAmerica, a 501(c)(3) environmental nonprofit that has received \$3 million in grants from the left-wing MacArthur Foundation since 2012 to support research on climate change.³⁶⁸ EcoAmerica is a member of the U.S. Climate Action Network, one of the more extreme protest groups involved in the 2017 People's Climate March.

Faison himself spoke at EcoAmerica's 2019 American Climate Leadership Summit in

Washington, DC. Interestingly, EcoAmerica has also received hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants from ClearPath and the Foundation for the Carolinas.³⁶⁹

Faison was even a panelist at the Future of Energy Summit in 2015 and 2016, along with speakers such as liberal stalwart and climate alarmist Al Gore and Debbie Dooley, a Republican activist widely considered an ideological sellout—particularly on climate change initiatives.³⁷⁰

To be fair, Faison is no liberal. He's very critical of left-wing environmental groups like the League of Conservation Voters, calling it "very harmful to responsible energy solutions [and] our democracy."³⁷¹ According to FEC records, he is a major donor to the Republican Party and has made it clear that his organization is not interested in seeking support among Democrats.³⁷² In 2015, he donated \$25,000 and \$50,000 to the presidential campaigns of Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Jeb Bush.³⁷³

"I support a free enterprise system unshackled from bad regulation and big labor unions," Faison wrote in a *Politico* op-ed shortly after launching ClearPath, "but I also believe that my party needs a fresh approach" toward reversing climate change.³⁷⁴ "I always felt a little alone out there as a Republican, and so I started ClearPath to create a dialogue around this in a way that hadn't been done before and sort of be part of the solution," Faison said in an interview, adding he'd like to see the party's candidates debate the solutions to climate change, not the science. "We think that there are real Republican solutions to the problem."

Yet ClearPath's leadership has murky ties to the Left. Its executive director, Rich Powell, is an former board member for the Circumpolar Conservation Union (a partner of the Natural Resources Defense Council) and collaborated with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and Environmental Defense Fund as a speaker at multiple conferences hosted by the liberal Aspen Institute.³⁷⁵ Former ClearPath board member Robert Perkowitz served on the boards of the Environmental Defense Fund and the Sierra Club. Perkowitz is also the founder and CEO of EcoAmerica.³⁷⁶

Climate Infiltrators? Even more interesting to observe is the Left’s treatment of ClearPath, which has ranged from tepid celebration to outright suspicion.

Politico included Faison in its list of the top 50 “thinkers, doers, and visionaries” in America for 2015, drawing favorable comparisons between him and the San Francisco hedge fund manager, environmentalist, and one-time presidential candidate Tom Steyer.

(Faison said the comparison made him “chuckle and cringe.”)³⁷⁷

Bloomberg wrote glowingly in November 2016 of “Jay Faison’s Expensive, Maddening Quest to Save the Planet (And the GOP).”³⁷⁸ And the *New York Times* profiled him favorably in June 2016.³⁷⁹

Mother Jones, however, didn’t buy it. “What’s the real deal with this GOP megadonor who’s claim he wants climate action?” wrote the staunchly liberal magazine in 2018, which accused Faison of being more interested in aiding the Republican Party and—horror of horrors—relying on the free market to solve global warming than “pushing Republicans to do much more.”³⁸⁰

ClearPath’s opposition to a carbon tax even spurred criticism from the Citizens’ Climate Lobby, a liberal group that otherwise typically associates with other members of the eco-Right. As the group’s communications director put it, “If you look at their website there isn’t any mention of climate change. It’s all about clean energy.”³⁸¹

GLOBAL WARMING ADVOCACY

ClearPath is one of the eco-Right groups that opposes carbon taxes as unviable. George David Banks, a ClearPath policy adviser, wrote in *The Hill*

in 2016 that a carbon tax “would only impose a cost on the economy with little to no environmental benefit,” adding that it’d be “political suicide to any Republican who would support it.”³⁸²



Republicans think this [global warming] is a Democratic conspiracy to create a bigger government,” Faison has said, but “there’s good evidence that is not the case.”

Instead, ClearPath supports policies revolving around heavy federal subsidies of renewables, urging Congress to further finance research into carbon capture technology—pulling CO₂ from emissions and burying it in the ground—and better

lithium batteries to store electricity generated by renewables. It strongly supports the expansion of nuclear power, which doesn’t emit any CO₂.³⁸³ It also supports hydropower from dams and natural gas production through fracking.³⁸⁴

The group’s support for nuclear power has put it at odds with the environmental Left, which has organized against nuclear weapons and energy since at least the 1970s. Unlike the Left, Jay Faison isn’t explicitly anti-coal and has argued that it can be made cleaner, though “we need to work towards it.”³⁸⁵ But ClearPath has also made common cause with the left-wing NRDC to lobby for more government spending on “clean” power research. “This kind of cooperation has been effective,” NDRC has stated.³⁸⁶

In early 2020, ClearPath endorsed House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy’s (R-CA) package of climate change bills, which would expand funding for carbon capture research, calling it a laudable “moonshot approach to carbon capture innovation.”³⁸⁷ Skeptical conservatives like the Club for Growth called the bills “liberal environmental policies,” which will “not make a single environmentalist vote for a Republican.”³⁸⁸

In mid-2019, ClearPath endorsed the Senate’s Better Energy Storage Technology (BEST) Act, which would further subsidize grid-scale energy storage research. (Current battery technology is insufficient to sustain the U.S. electrical grid.)

ClearPath wrote that the act “goes straight to the heart of what’s needed to leverage every clean energy source” available.³⁸⁹

Backing “Green” Republicans. From the start, ClearPath founder Jay Faison indicated that his groups were interested only in backing “green” Republicans, not Democrats. To date, his super PAC, ClearPath Action, has spent \$4.9 million in the 2016 and 2018 elections supporting sympathetic Republicans in the U.S. House and Senate.³⁹⁰ It’s also the top contributor (\$16,200) to the 2020 reelection campaign of Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA), as of March 2020.³⁹¹

LEADERSHIP

Board of Directors and Key Advisers. Besides Jay Faison, ClearPath’s board of directors consists of the following notable members:

Marye Lord is the tax compliance manager at the National Christian Foundation, a conservative donor-advised fund provider that has received substantial pass-through funding from the ClearPath Foundation.³⁹²

Sam Thornstrom is the founder and CEO of the Energy Innovation Reform Project, a right-leaning group that advocates for carbon capture research subsidies and other renewables. The Energy Innovation Reform Project has received funding from the ClearPath Foundation.³⁹³

Holly Welch Stubbing is president of the Foundation for the Carolinas, the major DAF provider that Jay Faison initially used to move millions of dollars to ClearPath. Left-wing groups—including the Energy Foundation, Hewlett Foundation, and George Soros’s Foundation to Promote Open Society—have also used the Foundation for the Carolinas as a fiscal pass-through.³⁹⁴

FUNDING

Except for its PAC, none of the groups in the ClearPath network is required to disclose its donors. However, the network claims that its sole non-PAC donor is Jay Faison, who endowed it with \$165.6 million in 2014.³⁹⁵

ClearPath mostly directs grants to other groups through DAF providers—third party charities that may act as pass-throughs for big donors and other nonprofits. This has the result of “washing” ClearPath’s ties to just about every group it funds, since all that’s traceable is the amount ClearPath initially donates to a DAF provider and how much a DAF provider ultimately pays out to its grant recipients—making it impossible to tie any grants explicitly back to ClearPath. However, the group has stated that it has directed money to the formerly libertarian Niskanen Center, a major carbon tax supporter.³⁹⁶

In 2018, the ClearPath Foundation, the primary 501(c)(3) nonprofit in the network, reported total revenues of \$5.4 million (almost all of which came from investment returns), total expenditures of \$13.7 million, and net assets of \$143.3 million. It paid out grants to other nonprofits totaling \$7.9 million, of which \$6.4 million was granted to the Schwab Charitable Fund, a donor-advised fund provider, making it impossible to determine which groups ultimately received the funds.³⁹⁷

In 2017, the ClearPath Foundation made \$4.8 million in grants, \$4.2 million of which went to the Schwab Charitable Fund and \$329,300 to the National Christian Foundation, both donor-advised fund providers.³⁹⁸

Interestingly, in 2018 the ClearPath Foundation endowed \$1.1 million to a new 501(c)(3) nonprofit called ClearPath Inc. and was its sole benefactor that year.³⁹⁹ It’s unclear what ClearPath Inc.’s role is, but it describes its mission as “to develop and advance conservative policies to address climate change by accelerating clean energy innovation.”⁴⁰⁰

YOUNG CONSERVATIVES FOR CARBON DIVIDENDS AND YOUNG CONSERVATIVES FOR ENERGY REFORM

Young Conservatives for Carbon Dividends (YCCD) and Young Conservatives for Energy Reform (YCER) are two closely aligned (but separate) eco-Right groups founded to drum up Republican support for the Baker-Shultz carbon tax and dividend plan. As their names suggest, YCCD and YCER target College Republicans and other center-right millennials with environmentalist policies.

YCCD was present at the 2020 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) outside Washington, DC, where it had a major booth on prime real estate among other, genuinely conservative organizations. Eco-Right advocate Bob Inglis' RepublicEn was also present at the conference.⁴⁰¹ It was also endorsed by Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Tim Scott (R-SC), and the late John McCain (R-AZ).⁴⁰²

In 2015, YCER hosted a National Security and Energy Independence Reception with the American Wind Energy Association, which advocates for major federal subsidies of wind turbine and a renewable electricity standard that would require state public utilities to phase out traditional energy sources in favor of renewables.⁴⁰³

While YCER has been in College Republican circles since 2012, it became IRS-recognized standalone nonprofit in 2018. YCCD became a standalone nonprofit in 2019. So they are too new to identify much in the way of their finances.⁴⁰⁴ However, Capital Research Center has identified two major YCER donors: the liberal William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, which gave YCER \$150,000 in 2018, and the Emily Hall Tremain Foundation, a little-known funder of global warming groups, which has given YCER \$225,000.⁴⁰⁵

Like others on the eco-Right, YCCD and YCER are critical of oil, natural gas, and coal, with YCER calling dependence on them a "a recipe for economic ruin." The groups support a transition to renewable energy sources from imported oil in the interest of national security. However, these

criticisms of U.S. energy policy haven't kept up with America's near-energy independence, almost entirely thanks to massive fracking of natural gas, such as this criticism by YCER:

The country is heavily dependent on foreign oil, draining our economy and leaving families victim to volatile gas prices. We borrow money from China to pay for oil purchased from some nations that do not like us.⁴⁰⁶

BAKER-SHULTZ CARBON TAX PLAN

Young Conservatives for Energy Reform doesn't actively support a carbon tax. YCER founder Michele Combs said in 2015, "I think it looks good, but I don't think it's something we're going to come out on right now." YCER is typically vague about its specific policies. According to Combs, "our ultimate policy goal is a comprehensive, bipartisan energy reform bill that would give us clean energy, improve energy efficiency, and also help small businesses."⁴⁰⁷

However, Young Conservatives for Carbon Dividends (YCCD) supports the Baker-Shultz carbon tax and dividend, one of the first carbon tax schemes introduced on the Right.⁴⁰⁸ The plan calls for a \$40 per metric ton carbon tax, which would ratchet up annually. The plan also includes a border-adjustment tax for "carbon content," effectively a tariff on imports from countries without carbon pricing schemes. The revenues from the Baker-Shultz carbon tax would then be paid to Americans via "carbon dividends"—a payoff to the people whose electricity bills and cost of living would dramatically rise as a result of Baker-Shultz's carbon tax—which also allows supporters to call the carbon tax "revenue-neutral."⁴⁰⁹

In January 2021, YCCD managing director Chris Johnson argued in RealClearEnergy that congressional Republicans must counteract the Biden administration's "misguided" climate

proposals by responding with a “comprehensive emissions-reducing solution of their own: the Baker-Shultz Carbon Dividends Plan,” which he claims is “rooted in the conservative principles of free markets and limited government.” YCCD’s goal, according to Johnson, is to reduce carbon dioxide levels by 57 percent by 2035.⁴¹⁰

In April 2021, YCCD was praised by a member of Citizens’ Climate Lobby, a left-wing carbon tax group, for supporting its Baker-Shultz plan, comparing the policy to “George H.W. Bush’s successful act to curb acid rain” and concluding, “Let’s honor Earth Day with a tax on carbon!”⁴¹¹

FOUNDERS

YCCD appears to be entirely millennial-run. Its list of founders and supporters is drawn from College Republican groups and university students.⁴¹²

Michele Combs is the founder of YCER and a former vice president of the Christian Coalition, an eco-Right pro-life group. (Her mother is longtime Christian Coalition president Roberta Combs.) The Christian Coalition has received massive grants from the left-wing Hewlett and Energy Foundations.⁴¹³

The liberal website *Grist* gushed in a 2015 interview that Combs is “possibly the most impassioned and unexpected messenger on clean energy and climate change the GOP has ever seen.” Combs, a South Carolinian, credits herself with getting South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham “involved in the climate and energy issues.” She’s “very close” with liberal climate hawk Al Gore (“I love Al Gore, but he’s the wrong messenger for us”) and environmental activist Larry Schweiger, particularly when he was president of the liberal National Wildlife Federation.⁴¹⁴

Combs reportedly became a climate change activist after discovering that coal-fired power plants

emit mercury, which is toxic to humans in large quantities and can cause birth defects:

Combs: “My doctor told me not to eat fish, and I said, ‘Why shouldn’t I eat fish?’ and I found out it was because of the mercury that was in the fish.”

Curious where that mercury comes from, Combs did some research. And she found that coal-fired power plants are the largest source of mercury pollution in the U.S.

Combs: “And I was surprised. I said I cannot believe that we as Republicans are not involved in this issue that is so important to the unborn.”⁴¹⁵

(Mercury is a naturally occurring metal element, particularly in the ocean and soil. One expert explains, “it is released in far smaller quantities by coal plants—an estimated 2,000 tons of manmade sources vs. tens of thousands of tons from natural sources. . . . Consuming above average amounts of fish is not detrimental to human health. Coal plants are not a dangerous source of mercury.”)⁴¹⁶

FUNDING

Almost nothing is known about the finances of either YCCD or YCER since both groups are too new to provide IRS Form 990 filings.

YCER’s most notable major donor, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, gave it \$150,000 in 2018. It’s unknown whether it continues to fund YCER.⁴¹⁷ The Hewlett Foundation—the private grantmaking foundation of the co-founder of the PC manufacturer Hewlett-Packard—also funds the Niskanen Center, Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions (CRES), and American Conservation Coalition on the eco-Right.⁴¹⁸

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a multi-billion-dollar conservation group established in 1951. It arguably leans more left than right, yet its close proximity to activists in the eco-Right and interest in carbon taxes cannot be ignored.

Unlike other groups on the eco-Right, TNC is less of a traditional environmentalist group than a land trust. It purchases vast tracts of land to prevent their development, a tactic known as “private lands conservation”—as opposed to the public lands conservation practiced by the national parks system. The organization owns conservation easements on 3.1 million acres in 49 states and close to \$6.6 billion in assets, making it by far the largest conservationist group in the world.⁴¹⁹

In 2019, TNC declared climate change the most “serious threat facing our planet today” and has called for carbon taxes alongside expanded federal subsidies for research into renewables.⁴²⁰ However, unlike decidedly left-wing groups, the Nature Conservancy strongly supports nuclear energy alongside other forms of renewable energy—a position almost universal on the eco-Right—to replace oil, natural gas, and coal.⁴²¹

ACCUSATIONS OF HYPOCRISY AND CRITICISM FROM THE LEFT

TNC is well-connected to major energy companies and publishes glowing blog posts on how they’re going green by “investing in nature.”⁴²² For years the group maintained a business council that included 18 major firms, notably Chevron, Royal Dutch Shell, and Duke Energy in the energy industry as well as Dow Chemical, a regular target of the Left. TNC board member James Rogers is a former CEO of Duke Energy. TNC’s website has since removed any mention of the business council, and the organization appears to have dropped official ties following attacks by anti-corporate activists.⁴²³

The organization’s willingness to work with industry has sometimes drawn scathing criticism

from leftist groups. In 2002, the *Los Angeles Times* accused the Nature Conservancy of hypocrisy for profiting from an oil well it owned near Galveston, Texas, on land that was supposed to be reserved for an endangered species of prairie chicken. TNC claimed it had drilled a new well on the property in 1999 with the aim of “dedicating the money to prairie chicken conservation.”⁴²⁴

Environmentalist outrage led to a two-year U.S. Senate investigation that sharply criticized the group’s practices. In turn, TNC swore off permitting new drilling on its lands, but *not* from honoring existing legal arrangements with the oil company operating the well.⁴²⁵

In 2014, the *New York Times* raked the Nature Conservancy again after the group agreed to allow the oil company to drill a replacement well in the Texas plot after the old one dried up. Activists cried foul and the left-wing Center for Biological Diversity berated TNC for “[losing] its moral compass.” (In fact, the *real* fowl in question was committed by federal authorities in 2012 for unrelated reasons.)⁴²⁶

The Nature Conservancy is a favorite target of radical environmentalist writer Naomi Klein, one of the leading supporters of the far-left Green New Deal. During the 2014 oil drilling scandal, Klein complained to reporters: “If the largest environmental organization in the world can’t figure out how to stop pumping oil and gas, how are they going to help the rest of us figure it out?”⁴²⁷ Writing for the left-wing *The Nation* in 2013, Klein claimed that TNC had “at least \$22.8 million invested in the energy sector, according to its 2012 financial statements” and had “accepted nearly \$10 million in cash and land contributions” from British Petroleum (BP).⁴²⁸

2004 IRS INVESTIGATION

Following a series of reports by the *Washington Post* in 2003 on TNC’s “financial irregularities and

conflicts of interest,” the IRS launched an audit of the group in early 2004. A tax expert interviewed by the *Post* described the audit as “uncommon [in] scope for a [public] charity.”⁴²⁹

It was revealed that TNC had given a \$1.5 million home loan to then-president Steve McCormick, who began repaying the loan once the *Washington Post* reported on the suspicious arrangement. Also discovered was TNC’s practice of providing employees with free housing and company cars, which allegedly went unreported in its IRS filings. The *Post* reported that TNC paid a contractor’s wife for work the contractor had done, possibly to conceal his reported income from the IRS and reduce his tax exposure.⁴³⁰

According to reporters, TNC regularly sold land parcels at a steep discount to would-be homebuilders, who would then make donations to TNC equal to the difference in price. In one instance, the group bought a \$2.1 million property in New York, used conservation restrictions to exclude it from development (save for a clause allowing one residence on the property), and resold it to a donor and local TNC trustee for \$500,000. The donor then returned the favor with a \$1.6 million donation to the Nature Conservancy.⁴³¹

The resulting furor over the scandal nearly led Congress revoke tax breaks on conservation easements—a practice meant to incentivize landowners to permanently exempt land from development—something the nonprofit monitor ProPublica has called “the billion-dollar loophole.”⁴³² Since the IRS audit, TNC has reportedly restructured many of its practices.

Work You Can Believe In



The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a multi-billion-dollar conservation group established in 1951.

SUPPORT FOR A CARBON TAX AND “NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS”

TNC supports carbon pricing schemes to supplement what it terms “natural climate solutions” (NCS), a catch-all for various land management policies it examined in a 2017 study. NCS hinges on reducing the “footprint” of livestock (read: fewer farm animals) and expanding the size of protected forests and wetlands to serve as carbon sinks. The group also supports expanded federal subsidies for research into renewables.⁴³³

TNC’s position on a carbon tax is perhaps most thoroughly documented in a 2019 white paper detailing its support for the 2015 Paris Climate Accords, an agreement that the United States rejoined in January 2021. Although the report doesn’t state a specific carbon tax rate, TNC maintains that a carbon tax is essential to its climate agenda.⁴³⁴

However, TNC has endorsed several carbon tax proposals, including the Climate Leadership Council’s \$40 per metric ton carbon tax (the Baker-Shultz Plan).⁴³⁵ It briefly considered but ultimately did not endorse a carbon tax ballot initiative in

Washington State in 2018 (voters opposed the measure by 56 percent).⁴³⁶

TNC endorsed the SWAP Act of 2019, a \$30 per metric ton carbon tax introduced by Reps. Francis Rooney (R-FL) and Daniel Lipinski (D-IL). The tax would have targeted producers of coal, natural gas, and petroleum and any imports of those commodities, and the bill would have used the revenues to reduce individual payroll taxes.⁴³⁷ TNC also endorsed the Cut Carbon (RWCC) Act simultaneously introduced in 2019 by Lipinski and co-sponsored by Rooney, which would have established a \$40 per metric ton carbon tax and redirected the revenues to Social Security payments.⁴³⁸

TNC advocates for a “debt conversion model” (also called “blue bonds”) for poor, mostly island-based countries to restructure their sovereign debt with lower interest rates and longer repayment periods, using the saved funds to finance marine conservation projects.⁴³⁹ The \$1.6 billion scheme was launched in 2019 with co-financing from Morgan Stanley and the World Bank, targeting some 20 unnamed countries.⁴⁴⁰

LOBBYING

While TNC isn’t especially political, it spent \$8.4 million on lobbying between 2016 and mid-2020. Historically, its lobbying has mostly focused on the annual congressional appropriations bill; expanding protections for the sage-grouse, a bird that featured surprisingly prominently in the Trump administration’s running fight over deregulation with environmentalists; funding for wildlife conservation programs administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); and the annual Farm Bill spending package. In 2020, the Nature Conservancy also lobbied on the coronavirus (COVID-19) relief bill, angling for “forest and fire provisions,” although the specifics remain unclear.⁴⁴¹

LEADERSHIP

President and CEO. Jennifer Morris is the CEO of the Nature Conservancy, a position she’s held since March 2020. Morris is a longtime officer for Conservation International, a left-leaning environmental advocacy group.⁴⁴²

Mark Tercek was CEO of the Nature Conservancy from 2008 to 2019, when he resigned over allegations of discrimination against female employees (staff called the organization a “good old boys club”) and mismanagement of a discrimination investigation against TNC president Brian McPeck during the height of the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment (McPeck also resigned from the organization).⁴⁴³ According to *Politico*, the investigation by an outside firm found that TNC had a “male-dominated culture where it is difficult for women to flourish” and “often sided with the accused, rather than the accuser” in cases of alleged sexual harassment.⁴⁴⁴

Prior to joining TNC, Tercek was a managing director for Goldman Sachs. His foundation, the Mark and Amy Tercek Foundation, has donated over \$1 million to the Nature Conservancy since 2008.⁴⁴⁵ Tercek’s total compensation in 2018 was \$818,838.⁴⁴⁶

Board of Directors. According to its latest IRS Form 990 (covering mid-2017 through mid-2018), The Nature Conservancy’s board of directors has 23 members—an unusually large number for a 501(c)(3) public charity. Notable directors⁴⁴⁷ include:

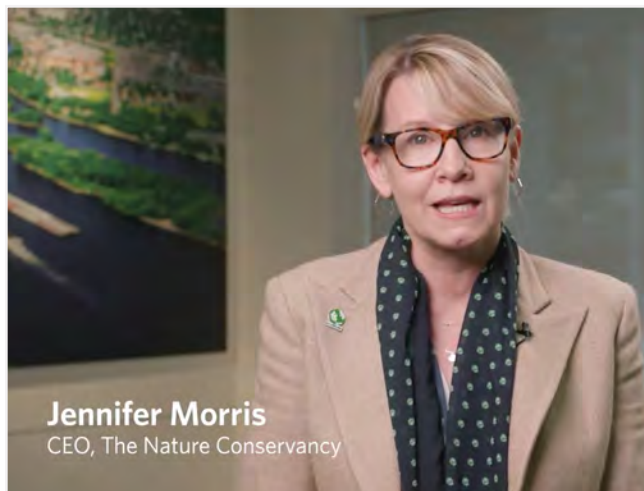
- **Jack Ma:** co-founder of the Chinese conglomerate Alibaba Group and trustee of TNC’s China program.
- **James Rogers (vice chair):** former president and CEO of Duke Energy.
- **Shona Brown (board secretary):** former Google senior vice president of business operations.
- **Bill Frist:** former U.S. senator (R-TN) and chairman of the Republican Senatorial Committee.
- **Frances Ulmer:** former Alaska lieutenant governor (D; 1994–2002).

- **Meg Whitman:** former CEO of Hewlett-Packard and Republican California gubernatorial candidate (2010).
- **Laurence D. Fink:** Billionaire and chairman of the multinational investment firm BlackRock.
- **Craig McCaw:** Cellular phone entrepreneur and founder of McCaw Cellular (now part of AT&T).
- **Joseph Gleberman:** Managing director of the Pritzker Organization, the private capital firm of Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker (D) and his family.
- **Jane Lubchenko:** Environmental scientist and former administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for President Barack Obama.
- **Rajiv “Raj” Shah:** President of the left-wing Rockefeller Foundation and former administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) under President Obama.

FUNDING

The Nature Conservancy is easily the largest nonprofit on the eco-Right. In 2018, the group reported total revenues of \$1.2 billion, total expenditures of \$908 million (including grants paid totaling \$67 million and nearly \$400 million in staff compensation), and net assets of \$6.6 billion.⁴⁴⁸ In 2019, the group reported total revenues of \$998 million, total expenditures of \$933 million (including grants paid totaling \$61 million), and net assets of \$6.7 billion.⁴⁴⁹

Unsurprisingly, TNC receives enormous grants from major foundations, mostly on the Left. The biggest donation it received was a \$45 million grant from the Wyss Foundation in 2014, the philanthropy of Swiss billionaire and environmentalist Hansjörg Wyss. Wyss is a former CEO of the global medical instrument manufacturer Synthes USA, a company that got in hot water in 2009 for conducting illegal experiments with a bone-cement product without conducting clinical trials that lead to the deaths of at least three people.⁴⁵⁰ Wyss, who does not hold U.S.



Jennifer Morris, CEO of the Nature Conservancy, is a longtime officer for Conservation International, a left-leaning environmental advocacy group.

citizenship or permanent residency, came under media scrutiny from the Left and Right in early 2021 when he attempted to build a media empire by purchasing the parent company to numerous major newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune*. This led to revelations about the billionaire's significant spending on left-wing nonprofits that aid Democratic politicians and liberal causes.⁴⁵¹ He has gifted nearly \$82 million to TNC and its state affiliates since 2007.⁴⁵²

Most of its seven-figure grants have vague descriptions, but a few reveal attempts to coordinate TNC's work with professional environmental activist groups, such as a \$15 million grant in 2017 from the liberal MacArthur Foundation “in support of a strategic alliance with Environmental Defense Fund to advance climate solutions.”⁴⁵³

TNC is a donor to many university agriculture and environmental studies departments, state land trusts and conservation groups, and even local governments and conservation authorities. It also makes grants to activist groups such as the League of Conservation Voters, Environmental Defense Fund, and Ducks Unlimited (a conservationist front for an environmental advocacy group), although this is the minority of TNC's annual grantmaking.⁴⁵⁴

OTHER ECO-RIGHT GROUPS

CONSERVATIVE ENERGY NETWORK (CEN)

Michigan-based advocacy group that advocates for “clean energy.” In 2017 and 2018, every known grant to CEN came from liberal foundations. In 2018 alone, over half of its funding came from the Energy Foundation, a major pass-through group formed by the Rockefeller Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, and Pew Charitable Trusts to bundle sums from left-wing donors in the guise of “philanthropy.”⁴⁵⁵

ALLIANCE FOR MARKET SOLUTIONS

Carbon tax advocacy group founded by Alex Flint, a former U.S. Senate Republican staffer and vice president of the Nuclear Energy Institute who now directs AMS.⁴⁵⁶ In 2017, the group published *Carbon Tax Policy: A Conservative Dialogue on Pro-Growth Opportunities*, a short book offering a \$15 per ton carbon tax as a “free market” alternative to left-wing climate change proposals.⁴⁵⁷

CONSERVAMERICA AND CONSERVATIVES FOR RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP

One of the first eco-Right groups, formed in 1995 as Republicans for Environmental Protection and renamed ConservAmerica in 2012 in an effort to appear less partisan.⁴⁵⁸ The group is arguably more conservationist than environmentalist and focuses on promoting clean air and water rather than climate change. For instance, it supported construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline in 2014.⁴⁵⁹ ConservAmerica opposes a carbon tax and proposes expanded public-private partnerships that would include easements and land exchanges to increase access to public lands.⁴⁶⁰

Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship is the 501(c)(3) arm of ConservAmerica. It has advocated for expanded use of renewable energy, including geothermal power.⁴⁶¹

CONSERVATIVES FOR CLEAN ENERGY

Organization founded by two Republican consultants in 2014 to advocate for expanded use of renewable energy through government subsidies. It has received funding from a number of left-wing sources, including the Energy Foundation and Rockefeller Brothers Fund. In 2017, it defended this decision, saying it was “happy to work with, and get support from, any organization that sees the economic and job creation benefits of clean energy.”⁴⁶²



Conservative Energy Network is a liberal-funded, Michigan-based advocacy group that advocates for “clean energy.”

CONSERVATIVES FOR ENERGY FREEDOM

A Florida-based eco-Right group that has received funding from the Georgia Conservation Voters, a state affiliate of the left-leaning League of Conservation Voters.⁴⁶³

CHRISTIAN COALITION OF AMERICA

A social conservative group that also advocates for an expanded definition of “pro-life” to include environmentalist views of the climate and the development of natural resources. The Christian Coalition was founded in 1988 by Christian broadcaster and Republican presidential candidate Marion Gordon “Pat” Robertson and is ecumenical. While the group supports numerous mainstream conservative positions on health care, abortion, and other issues, it supports the expanded use of renewable energy as a means to secure U.S. energy independence from foreign countries.⁴⁶⁴

EVANGELICAL ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK (EEN)

EEN is a nominally conservative group for Evangelical Christians that supports numerous left-wing environmental policies, including higher federal fuel economy mandates. It is heavily funded by liberal foundations, including the [Marisla Foundation](#), [Rockefeller Brothers Fund](#), and the [Energy Foundation](#).⁴⁶⁵ EEN was founded in 1993 by Ron Sider, an environmental activist who has called for socialized medicine, a carbon trading program, and an increase in the minimum wage. EEN tactics have also been described as attempts to “capitalize on the conservative commitment to ‘family values’” through its Healthy Families, Healthy Environment campaign launched in 2001.”⁴⁶⁶

R STREET INSTITUTE

A right-leaning think tank based in Washington, DC. R Street is not primarily an environmentalist organization, and it holds moderate or conservative, free-market positions on numerous issue. However, the group supports a carbon tax.⁴⁶⁷ Left-leaning foundations such as the [William and Flora Hewlett Foundation](#), [Energy Foundation](#), and [Foundation to Promote Open Society](#) provided 26 percent of

R Street’s total contribution and grant revenue between 2012 and 2017 and 71 percent of the organization’s total foundation support during that period.⁴⁶⁸ In 2018, R Street received \$4.15 million from the Hewlett Foundation according to Hewlett’s website.⁴⁶⁹



Christian Coalition of America is a social conservative group that also advocates for an expanded definition of “pro-life” to include environmentalist views of the climate and the development of natural resources.

WESTERN WAY RESOURCES

A nominally right-leaning advocacy group that supports left-leaning public lands policies and the expanded use of renewables.⁴⁷⁰

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