

SPEAKING OF GLOBAL WARMING...

A GUIDE TO TALKING
ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE
IN TEXAS

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This guide is for anyone who wants to talk about global warming. It was developed especially for Texans, but many of the arguments presented here can apply in any community.

It is also a living document. We will be posting discussion boards for each existing section of the guide, and will create new ones as people suggest additional categories. Go online and visit www.climatechallengetexas.org to make your own contributions and read what others have to say. Check back regularly to get updated versions of the guide.

Economy

Addressing climate change has long been held up by free-market defenders who have claimed that doing so would hurt the economy. We now have evidence to indicate that nothing could be further from the truth.

1. We can create thousands of jobs in Texas by investing in renewable energy.

Numerous reports indicate that Texas has more combined wind and solar power potential than any other state in the country. These same reports say we can create a net increase in jobs by switching from fossil fuel technologies to renewables. A net increase in jobs means that even though some jobs will be lost in dirty energy industries, we will create more jobs than we lose and provide an overall benefit to the state's economy.

Citations:

"Clean Energy: Jobs for America's Future" available at:

http://www.worldwildlifefund.org/climate/publications/clean_energy_jobs_2001.pdf

2. Investing whole-heartedly now will make America a global leader in one of the biggest technologies of the 21st century.



The entire world is going to have to get its energy from clean and renewable sources. There are too many people demanding too much energy for us to abate global warming through reduced consumption alone. Nuclear is also a non-option at the scale of the problem because the waste is dangerous and cannot be destroyed. Therefore most of the world's energy will come from renewable sources, and by investing our nation's resources in those technologies now, we can be ahead of the curve and reap the benefits as we export goods and technologies. This revolution and the accompanying economic boom is certainly comparable to the tech boom of the 90s, and probably on the scale of the post-war boom in the US.

3. We must reach these technologies ahead of the Chinese and other labor-based economies.

The Chinese especially have demonstrated their ability to compete in global markets and catch up in technology development very quickly. It is wonderful for the Chinese people that their economy has been developing so quickly, but there is no reason for us to stand by and let ourselves be eclipsed by another nation.

The Chinese are already investing themselves in the technologies of the future – and they are years ahead of us on fuel-efficient vehicles. What happens when they start exporting those products to the US in addition to all the goods we already buy? We have enormous and enormous trade deficit with China, and they also hold much of our outstanding debt. This leaves us with two choices – revolutionize energy technology and export it to China to begin addressing these deficits, or let the Chinese revolutionize energy technology and watch the deficits grow.

Citations:

["The World's First Magnetic Levitation Wind Turbines Unveiled in China"](#)

4. We are borrowing \$1 billion every working day to pay for foreign oil. This increasing debt is putting us at the mercy of countries like China that own our debt, and reducing the value of the US dollar.

The fact is that no matter where we drill, US oil production will never come close to meeting the demand of American consumers. If we want to reduce our dependence on this foreign oil and reduce our mounting debt, we have to increase fuel-efficiency now, and we have to switch to new fuels in the future. Alternatives such as electric vehicles and biodiesel can be produced at home, creating domestic jobs that improve our energy sector. The long standing assumption is that America's economy is driven by what we consume. Wouldn't it make more sense to have an economy driven by what we produce?

5. We can create 5 million jobs in a new clean energy corps to give people a pathway out of poverty and grow a stronger middle class.

There are millions of Americans who have work that is inconsistent or nonexistent, not because they do not want to work, but because there are no opportunities in their communities that match their skills. The federal government can invest in training programs that will make these people capable of rebuilding the American infrastructure over the next several decades so that we can beat global warming. These people can be trained to increase home or building efficiency, manufacture wind turbine and solar panels, install solar panels on rooftops, and so much more.

The effort to defeat global warming has to be enormous, and it can't all be done in brain-trusts. The working class people of this country deserve the opportunity to make their contribution and they are indispensable to our success. We can give people work they will be proud of, reshaping their country, and give them and their families the opportunity to pursue the American dream.

National Security

National security has been of paramount importance to the American people since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Unfortunately, the definition of national security has remained narrow in the public debate and few people realize how important climate change may be to our own security.

1. **Our current energy supply relies too much on companies and governments in the most unstable regions of the world, requiring us to deploy our military to make those resources secure.**



You have to be careful when using this argument not to get drawn into a discussion about Iraq specifically. The US has long held a public position that we are militarily active in the Middle East in large part because so much of our energy comes from the region. Setting aside the Iraq war, we have sent troops to Afghanistan to keep the USSR out; we have sold weapons to Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Israel in an effort to stabilize “rogue” nations; we have overlooked terrorism originating in Saudi Arabia in order to preserve our relations.

The instability of the Middle East and other regions from which we derive our oil causes prices to fluctuate and has put us at the mercy of foreign regimes and the OPEC cartel. This fluctuation has enormous impacts on our economic vitality, but cannot easily be addressed through military action.

2. **Climate change will increase the frequency of major floods, droughts, and storms. These will have high costs – both human and economic.**

It is difficult to know just how much climate change will affect these types of events in various parts of the country, but it is well established by science that increased warming will cause them to increase. As Katrina demonstrated, our ability to cope with these types of security threats is woefully inadequate to the problem.

3. **Climate change will contribute to conditions that can destabilize governments in the most volatile regions of the world and create a breeding ground for terrorism.**

A changing climate will mean people whose economic sustenance is already threatened will be put at greater risk as crops fail, diseases spread, and events such as floods and droughts increase. This will act as a multiplier to the threats of terrorism and revolution. The US military is already spread thinner than is preferable and may have trouble addressing the growing threats in a global context.

Citations:

“National Security and the Threat of Climate Change”

4. **Stable parts of the world, including the US and Europe, will not be exempt from climate change’s implications.**



Even in countries where economic and social conditions make society less likely to devolve into utter chaos, increased instability in bordering regions and those we rely on economically will have implications for our own security. There will be increased pressure to accept refugees from chaotic regions, homeland security will be stretched thin to secure our borders, and aid missions will become more frequent and more dangerous.

And that is only the cost to our own national security. Consider what it will be like for the millions of people living in countries that do not have the resources needed to adapt to a new climate. How will they cope, and what will they be made to endure?

Citations:

“National Security and the Threat of Climate Change”

5. **Rising sea levels and the loss of major coastal communities represents a threat to domestic tranquility unlike anything we have experienced.**

Rising sea levels will not only create refugees in the developing world, but here at home as well. Many of our major cities are threatened by even a single meter of sea level rise, which many scientists today say is inevitable. The destruction of property and mass migration of millions of Americans will create chaos and unpredictable circumstances throughout the country. If that doesn’t sound scary, think about it this way: *If terrorists were threatening to put all of our coastal cities underwater, how would our government respond?*

Communities of Faith

At present this guide deals only with issues that will resonate with Christian congregations. This is because the background of the current author is Christian and I feel unable to contribute much that relates to other faiths. It is my sincere hope that other readers will make contributions to provide a more diverse set of arguments that will appeal to other faith-based communities.

1. **There is a covenant between God and humanity which states that humans are the stewards of God's creation.**

God did not create the Earth simply to be destroyed by human beings. Our energy consumption is threatening the great diversity of life on our planet and our hubris leads us to say that we have the right to destroy that diversity. Humans were entrusted with the care of the planet, and doing so means supporting the Earth's life-systems.

Citations:

Fueling Our Future by Texas Impact

"What does the Bible say about Creation Care?" available at:

<http://www.creationcare.org/resources/scripture.php>

2. **Energy consumption drives a wedge between the rich and the poor, and a more equitable system is demanded by the teachings of Jesus Christ.**

Jesus preaches throughout the New Testament that it is the duty of the well-off to distribute the benefits of their wealth to those who are disadvantaged. We will always have the poor among us, but we should take every opportunity to lift up those who have no means to do so themselves.



The introduction of a new energy economy will address some of the fundamental concerns of environmental justice. Currently, dirty energy industries tend to locate their oil refineries, natural gas plants, and coal-fired power plants in communities with large poor and minority populations. This is not necessarily an act of overt racism or classicism so much as it is a function of convenience. These communities have fewer resources to fight the plants, they are in need of jobs (any jobs), education levels tend to be much lower, and the community has so

many other concerns that the plants are able to avoid meaningful oversight or contributions to those affected by their pollution. This is why asthma rates among Blacks and Latinos/as is much higher than among Whites.

A new energy economy would create thousands and perhaps millions of working class jobs that would help lift people out of poverty. Go to www.greenforall.org for more details. It would also reduce pollution by eliminating the need for polluting power plants and benefit the health of all Americans, especially the poor and marginalized.



People of Color and Marginalized Communities

For too long the environmental movement in this country has only paid lip service to people of color and to the working poor. The Campus Climate Challenge and ReEnergize Texas recognize the unique opportunity the climate change problem presents to unite people of all races, colors, and creeds. This section is not just about convincing traditionally overlooked communities that our solutions are good for

them – it is about engaging these communities, asking them to join our movement, and acknowledging their perspectives and contributions as a fundamental part of our strategy moving forward.

In Texas, Whites do not represent a majority of the population. The Hispanic population in particular is growing very quickly. It is time that racial minorities had their voices heard at the highest levels, and the concerns of their communities must be placed on an even pedestal with those of more privileged communities. This movement is not just about the environment (as should be clear from the arguments above), it is about a progressive vision for the future of our country in which equal opportunity for all and sustainable economic development contribute to the well being of people and the planet.

1. **Poor and vulnerable communities in the US and around the world will suffer most from the effects of climate change. Need an example? Think Katrina.**

When the hurricane hit New Orleans in 2005, those who had a working car, a tank of gas, and a credit card could scurry out of town and find a hotel to wait out the storm. When the levees broke, those with insurance policies recovered at least some of their property losses. And what about everyone else? Those who were living paycheck to paycheck, who got around using mass transit or their own two feet. A huge number of them were stuck in the city with no place to go and no way to get there.

This is the way of things when natural catastrophes strike. The poorest and most vulnerable communities are most affected. Climate change is no different. As fuel costs rise, who's going to help the poor afford basic necessities like food? Increasing numbers of droughts and floods will devastate family farmers and again drive up the cost of food. And sea levels are projected to rise in the coming decades, displacing people living in coastal communities (by the way, 53% of Americans live in coastal communities). Where will people go? The Katrina diaspora has moved all over the country, and unprepared cities (especially in Texas) saw rising rates of unemployment as the local economy struggled to absorb more workers. What will happen when all of our major coastal cities are displacing workers – LA, New York, San Francisco, Houston, Miami, etc.?

For a visual representation of what sea level rise is projected to do to our coasts, visit http://www.architecture2030.org/current_situation/coastal_impact.html.



Port Aransas after 1.75 meters of sea level rise

2. **Poor and vulnerable communities are most affected by the dirty energy economy today. Our current energy production system is disproportionately poisoning people of color while at the same time make these communities dependent on polluting industries for sustenance.**

Asthma rates among Blacks is twice what it is among Whites. Is this a coincidence or because coal plants increase the chances of asthma among people living nearby? What's more, wealthier folks can afford health insurance and medical costs to help treat some of the symptoms caused by breathing in toxins created by burning fossil fuels. Poor folk cannot. This increases mortality rates among lower-income individuals, a disproportionate number of which are non-white.



Please refer to Argument #2 under "Communities of Faith" for additional commentary.

3. **Solving the climate change problem will mean thousands of jobs for working class Texans and millions around the country.**

If we are going to beat this thing, it's going to take a monumental effort across the entire nation. A whole new energy infrastructure will have to be erected, new buildings that save energy will go up, and existing infrastructure will need to be modified and retrofitted to meet our energy needs in a clean and sustainable way. All of this will take labor, and who better to do the job than the working class people of America?

Green for All is a non-profit group that is calling for the creation of 5 million new jobs in a Clean Energy Corp that harkens back to the Depression era when President Roosevelt put Americans to work improving infrastructure, planting trees, and tending to parks. We need a similar vision for the present, one that gives people work they can be proud of because they know it is contributing to a cleaner and more prosperous future.

