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What the Democratic Party gets wrong about climate change

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Dear Democrats: On the environment, you need to win over people like me.

You're concerned about climate change. It's one of your defining issues. You think everyone should be equally alarmed. So, the best way to go about winning over your fellow self-governed citizens is to ... demonize them, enact policies that make their lives harder, and fail to make any visible sacrifices yourself? Seems legit.

Yet, this has been the modus operandi under President Joe Biden, Gov. Tom Wolf, and many other Green New Dealers. It's healing the Earth via tyranny, rather than democratic means. This strategy is doomed to fail.

The Pennsylvania judiciary recently smacked down Gov. Wolf in his attempt to unilaterally force Pennsylvania into the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). The legislature had already voted against this — and most Pennsylvanians, according to a Commonwealth Foundation poll, supported withdrawing from RGGI immediately. Every other state joined RGGI via legislative action. Did the constitutional amendment limiting Wolf's emergency powers not give him the clue that you can't run roughshod over the people who put you in office?

Apparently not.

The Biden administration's helpful answer to high gas prices is for Americans to buy electric cars at \$40,000 a pop. They tell us this while simultaneously seeking to all but shut down fossil fuel production. (Do they not know how electricity is made?) Then the president tries to blame increased prices on Vladimir Putin while ignoring his own administration's actions.

Most galling is the president's assertion that the soaring energy prices people are facing are part of an "incredible transition." After getting fileted in the media and by members of his own party, he acknowledged the economic pain people are facing — but has done little to alleviate it. Democrats claim to care about the poor while low-income and families of color disproportionately carry the burden of progressive environmental policies.

The climate movement needs credible spokespeople — Biden isn't one. Nor are the slew of Hollywood hypocrites who bang on about how we must sacrifice for the environment while they zoom around in private jets and build mansions on vulnerable coastlines.

Alas, dearest progressives, perhaps no one takes you seriously because many of you and your frontmen don't sacrifice nearly enough. To win a cause, you need a generous orthodoxy — one where the leaders give up comforts in their own lives to advance something greater than themselves. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. went to jail. Gandhi, on a hunger strike. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez went to the \$35,000-a-plate Met Gala in a designer dress. See the difference?

Individual action alone cannot solve all environmental problems. It must be coupled with public policies that promote free-market solutions. But the climate movement needs to set a good example if they want to get their message across — particularly to conservative skeptics who think progressives are being hypocritical.

It's at this point progressives start hurtling "climate change denier" at me rather than acknowledging that the skepticism from the right has legitimate roots.

Doubt and questioning are the essence of science. If you want blind faith, may I suggest a religion?

Until then, let us all agree the Earth has warmed over the last century and that greenhouse gases impact the climate, but that "as far as the computer models go, there isn't a useful consensus at the level of detail relevant to assessing human influences." That's from Steve Koonin, a computational physicist and the undersecretary for science in the Department of Energy during the Obama administration.

In his must-read book *Unsettled*, Koonin takes on the current catastrophizing of the climate. He argues that decisions about how to address climate change should be informed by an "accurate understanding of scientific certainties and uncertainties." That basic understanding is missing from solutions put forward by progressives. No wonder so many reject them.

Some data — such as from a study by the Cato Institute — shows that RGGI states experienced no added emissions reductions and minimal impact on increasing renewable energy capacity. There's also an obstinacy amongst environmentalists to acknowledge gains. Pennsylvania has already begun to lessen greenhouse gas emissions thanks to improved renewable technology and advancement in horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing. Between 2007 and 2019, Pennsylvania reduced emissions by 40%.

There's a better way to address climate problems than government intervention: debate and discourse around the problem while allowing the market to test new ideas and innovations. Let's incentivize entrepreneurs to take risks and bring new ideas for improving the environment. Not all ideas will have an impact. But unlike too many government programs which get funded regardless of outcomes, ideas that don't work in the marketplace fail — at no cost or risk to taxpayers. Britain's Prince William is promoting free-market solutions via his Earthshot Prize. This is a step in the right direction.

We can continue to debate the degree to which humans are contributing to the Earth's warming and disagree over who the best spokesperson for this crisis is, but one thing isn't up for debate: Hyperbole won't improve our environment — reasoned debate and the free market will.