



## **US Carbon Tax “Close To Inevitable,” Conservative Leader Proclaims — Moral Disgrace Of Ignoring Global Warming Too Strong**

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Not working to stop global warming is one of the most disgraceful, horrible things a policymaker can do. It demonstrates a complete lack of morals — unless the policymaker is simply ignorant, but that is very barely a legitimate excuse these days, given that the opinions of thousands of climate scientists are almost 100% that humans are causing unprecedented global warming that could destroy society.

Starting from ABC, the question for some may remain “Why is the Republican Party still opposing the existence of this unprecedented societal threat and strong global warming action?”

For some in party leadership, the story is clear: they are closely tied to one or more fossil fuel industries, and they are selfishly ignoring the science and fighting the solutions out of pure greed and corruption.

While fossil fuel companies send a *ton* of cash into Republican policymakers’ piggy banks, I don’t actually think that’s the direct reason for most Republican congresspeople’s opposition. While congresspeople have a great number of resources available to them, they still just have 24 hours in the day, and their “resources” can very easily be biased or misinformed. Relying on party leadership and the conservatives who “call the shots” for guidance on how to respond to a specific issue, the simple story could be that most of these policymakers don’t take the time to look deeply into the matter with an objective mind, and follow suit with the corrupt and lying Republican leaders who are heavily invested in the burning of deadly fossil fuels. I still think this is a moral #fail of a very high order, because no matter how much you know, you have to know that the truth regarding this matter is hugely important to billions of humans and the future of the human race, in general.

And I think that is where opposition to global warming solutions like a carbon tax (or carbon fee & dividend that sends the revenues from a carbon fee right back to the people of the United States, resulting in no net increase in taxes) is breaking down. A growing number of conservatives have learned enough about global warming and climate change that they are eager to change the party line or even break the party line in order to get stronger US climate action

moving. The latter would be a huge deal, because Republican congresspeople are known to vote in lockstep, taking orders from the party leadership without dissent, to a rather insane degree. Freedom of thought is not a cherished ideal when it comes votes on just about anything, but especially this topic — everyone with the GOP badge is expected to fall in line. Some congresspeople who have broken the party line on this topic later had to face difficult primaries in which their opponents were heavily backed by Republican movers and shakers and almost without exception (or maybe without exception) lost their seat.

But there is reportedly talk that Republican congresspeople with a conscience who have done their duty and taken the time to learn about global warming are getting restless. They don't want the United States, and especially the Republican Party, to be in the history books for costing us millions (or more) lives, tens of trillions of dollars of damage, and unquantifiable suffering simply to extend the wealth of some polluting billionaires and millionaires.

*POLITICO* reports on the following recent statements from US conservative leaders:

- Eli Lehrer, the president of the free-market think tank the R Street Institute: “In the long run, a carbon tax or something like it is probably close to inevitable.”
- Jerry Taylor, president of the libertarian think tank the Niskanen Center: “There are some Republicans, more than you might think, who are deeply uncomfortable with the party’s position on climate change.” (As they should be!)
- Aparna Mathur, a resident scholar at the conservative American Enterprise Institute: “It is worrying to me that the House would consider legislation to oppose a common-sense approach to addressing climate change. Instead of relying on dozens of federal and state regulations that themselves are costly, a carbon tax would be transparent and cost-effective.” (This is in response to the likelihood that the US House of Representatives is about to prematurely vote against a carbon tax in order to try to build momentum against the option, should it become a serious possibility in the coming year or so.)

We have reported (via *Think Progress*) in the past on conservative leaders who support a carbon tax, or carbon fee & dividend:

- Former Representative Bob Inglis (R-SC) said years ago that a carbon tax “really is a conservative position.”
- The Cato Institute’s Peter van Doren noted the obvious: “So, if fossil fuel combustion produces byproducts that cause negative health effects on third parties as well as changes in the temperature of the atmosphere, the obvious lesson from economics is to increase fossil fuel prices enough through taxation to account for these effects.”
- Gregory Mankiw, economic advisor to Mitt Romney and chairman of former President Bush’s Council of Economic Advisers: “The economics here is straightforward: emitting carbon into the atmosphere entails a negative externality. In absence of any policy, people will emit too much.... The case for a carbon tax looks even stronger after examining the other options on the table.”

- Last but certainly not least, George Shultz (an economist in the Eisenhower administration, secretary of the Treasury and Labor as well as Director of the Office of Management and Budget in the Nixon administration, and Secretary of State for almost 7 years under President Ronald Reagan) has long been an outspoken supporter of a carbon tax. In 2012, he stated:

“What we do today is going to have a big impact on the future. I have three, soon to be four, great-grandchildren. I’ve got to do what I can to see that they have a decent world. And if we let this go on and on the way it’s going right now, they’re not going to have one. Getting control of carbon is right at the heart of the problem. “We have to have a system where all forms of energy bear their full costs. For some, their costs are the costs of producing the energy, but many other forms of energy produce side effects, like pollution, that are a cost of society. The producers don’t bear that cost, society does. There has to be a way to level the playing field and cause those forms of energy to bear their true costs. That means putting a price on carbon.

“We’ve studied a variety of ways to do that, and to me the most appealing way is a revenue-neutral carbon tax. That is, you distribute all the revenue from the carbon tax in some fashion back to taxpayers, so there is no fiscal drag on the economy. British Columbia has a revenue-neutral carbon tax. They started low and increased the tax over five years to a much higher level, so people could adjust. The revenue is distributed mostly to individuals, so it’s popular.”

Let’s listen to George Shultz and the other ethical, positive, compassionate people of the Republican Party. Let’s push all congresspeople, on the left but especially on the right, to vocally and strongly support a carbon fee & dividend.