

THE DAILY CALLER

New York Times Finds A Few Republicans Who Support Carbon Tax, Most Are Still Opposed

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Conservatives are lining up behind a carbon tax as a replacement for regulations to fight global warming, according to a New York Times opinion story, but the piece only cites examples of fringe conservative groups embracing such a tax.

Tina Rosenberg argues some Republicans, oil companies, and Trump voters are receptive to working with environmentalists to enact a carbon tax in exchange for a repeal of global warming regulations. Rosenberg says all these groups should unite behind a carbon tax plan written by the Climate Leadership Council, a little-known group led by former Republican political appointees.

But Rosenberg may be overstating her case. Even carbon tax advocates think she overstates conservative support for a carbon tax.

“Oil companies have been talking about this for a while,” David Bookbinder, general counsel for a pro-carbon tax think tank called the Niskanen Center that self-identifies as free-market, told The Daily Caller News Foundation.

“Their position is that if you’re going to do anything, government should do a carbon tax. They’re not affirmatively clamoring for a carbon tax and they’re certainly not working for one,” said Bookbinder, who used to represent the Sierra Club.

Most Republicans, including those who influenced the Donald Trump administration’s energy and environmental policies, strongly oppose carbon taxation.

“The climate-industrial complex wants Republicans to front their efforts,” Myron Ebell, who headed Trump’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) transition team, told TheDCNF.

“The arguments being advanced for a carbon tax as prudent conservative policy are ridiculous,” said Ebell, who works at the free market Competitive enterprise Institute. “The climate-industrial complex will never support eliminating climate regulations and renewable energy mandates and subsidies in return for enacting a carbon tax.”

Liberal organizations donated heavily to attempts to attract conservatives to global warming alarmism. The MacArthur Foundation, for example, donated \$20 million to the Nature Conservancy and the Environmental Defense Fund for just that purpose, according to Ebell.

“Even if they [conservatives] did agree, it would be insane for conservatives to accept such a deal because President Trump is eliminating the Obama climate agenda without making any concessions and the Congress in 2015 enacted legislation that will reduce wind and solar subsidies over the next several years,” Ebell said. ” Thus our policies have prevailed without doing a deal with environmental pressure groups. A carbon tax has nothing to recommend it to conservatives.”

Carbon tax supporters claim pricing emissions is the best way to avoid global warming. They see a carbon tax as the most efficient way to reduce rising CO2 emissions.

“A carbon tax is simply the most economically efficient means of reducing carbon emissions,” Bookbinder said. “Let’s go with the most economically efficient system as opposed to cap and trade or God knows the horror of horrors on the regulatory end of things. That’s the bottom line.”

Critics say carbon taxation disproportionately harms the poorest members of society.

A 2009 study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found a carbon tax would double the tax burden of the poorest households, making it effectively impossible to have both a carbon tax and a living wage.

Only four countries — Ireland, Sweden, Chile, and Finland — have full-blown carbon taxation. The largest economy to ever have a carbon tax, Australia, repealed it in 2014 over concerns it was harming job creation.

“The tax and dividend proposal from the Republican elders is a giant redistribution scheme from people who typically vote for Republicans to people who typically vote for Democrats,” Ebell said. “I don’t think even the weakest-minded elected Republicans are going to fall for it.”

Bookbinder said this is far more economically efficient than the current regulatory regime. Under current policies, governments could spend as much as \$16.5 trillion between now and 2030 to promote green energy, according to projections from the International Energy Agency.

Rosenberg’s NYT piece argues that carbon taxation could be a bipartisan political winner, but some scientists think it wouldn’t even work. Carbon taxation would devastate the U.S.

economy while doing nothing to reduce projected global warming, according to research published in October by scientists at the libertarian Cato Institute.

“A carbon dioxide tax passed by a Republican congress would be political suicide,” Dr. Pat Michaels, a climate scientist at Cato who co-authored the research, told TheDCNF. “In 2010, the Democrats lost 64 seats and control of the House. Most close races were lost by a Democrat who voted for cap-and-trade, which is just a complicated carbon tax, in 2009.”

Supporting a carbon tax could also damage the Republican party’s brand as the anti-tax party, according to some analysts.

“The clear contrast between a party that is pro-energy and anti-tax and a party that is pro-tax and anti-energy is a political asset of immense value to conservatives,” Marlo Lewis, an analyst at the libertarian Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), told The DCNF. “So naturally, progressives continually try to hoodwink us into advocating new taxes on energy.”

Lewis pointed out that James Baker, who is heavily involved in the Climate Leadership Council, has record of harming the GOP brand with tax increases.

“James Baker was part of the brain trust that destroyed the G.W.H. Bush presidency by persuading Bush to break his no-new-taxes campaign pledges,” Lewis said. “Bush raised taxes, the economy tanked, and in ’92 the base stayed home. Now, Baker and other GOP elders urge Trump to endorse carbon taxes even though Trump beat Clinton in no small part because he promised to cut taxes and unleash America’s energy producers. They have learned nothing either from Bush’s failure or Trump’s success.”