



## It's too early to say if climate change is behind the rash of hurricanes

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**Patrick Michaels for the Cato Institute:** Discussions about global warming and hurricanes obscure the human tragedies unfolding before our eyes. With climate science being as politicized as it is, we've received quite a lot of inquiries as to whether those rushing to blame this on human emissions are onto something, and it's natural to wonder what's going on when the news cycle is dominated by storms. The truth of the matter is: we don't yet have the data to know.

On Aug. 30, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory said: It is premature to conclude that human activities – and particularly greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming – have already had a detectable impact on Atlantic hurricane or global tropical cyclone activity.

This update cites research showing a "2 to 11 percent" increase in hurricane intensity by the end of this century. Given the enormous year-to-year variability in storms, the highest figure would take nearly 50 years to emerge from the noise in the data, and the lowest one, probably over a century.

As we said at the outset, this subject is better treated in a comprehensive fashion after the tragedies of today start to heal.

### **Tax reform will expand the economy, briefly**

**Benjamin Page for the Tax Policy Center:** President Trump and his top economic advisers often argue that a major tax reform would permanently boost the nation's economic growth rate to 3 percent per year or higher, a significant increase from the roughly 2 percent annual growth rate of recent years. But this argument misstates a subtle but important point: Tax reform is more likely to have an effect on the level of economic activity than its rate of growth.

In other words, even the most optimal version of tax reform is likely to result in a one-time increase in output rather than an ongoing year-after-year hike in the pace of growth of economic activity.

To understand why, imagine an ideal reform that lowers marginal tax rates, taxes different types of economic activity similarly, and reduces deductions and credits, all while raising roughly the same amount of revenue as current law. ...

Suppose that reform reduced marginal tax rates while broadening the income tax base. Lower marginal rates on labor income would increase after-tax wages, encouraging some workers to put

in longer hours and inspiring others to enter the labor force. Because it takes time for people to adjust the amount of work they do, it would take a few years for the economy to feel the full impact of the change. During that time the growth rate would be temporarily higher, but once the labor market adjusts to the new level of labor supply, economic growth would revert to its long-term potential rate.

### **Republicans haven't written off college**

**Rachel Fishman for New America:** Yes, it is true that Republicans believe colleges and universities have a negative impact on the way things are going in this country. This should not be dismissed, and more should be done to unpack the driving forces behind these sentiments because the answers could have important implications for policymaking. A Gallup survey sheds some light — it asked an open-ended follow-up question to those who said they only had some or very little confidence in higher education. The top reasons? Republicans see colleges as being too liberal/political (32 percent) and not allowing students to think for themselves/pushing their own agenda (21 percent).

But crucially, Republicans don't feel so negative that they would let their own children forgo a college education. Indeed, Democrats want the same for their children, albeit they feel more confident about higher education and believe it has a positive impact on the way things are going in this country. What will be important is to disentangle people's views of higher education as an elite pursuit from its impact on their personal lives, especially given the range of postsecondary options available.

While some of these survey results may alarm those working in higher education and those who believe in the importance of education beyond high school, it is important not to lose sight of the forest for the trees. In a time when there is plenty of focus is on what divides Republican and Democrats, conservatives and liberals, it should not be overlooked that regardless of party affiliation or ideology, most people see the value of higher education and believe it is the best way to prepare for a job or career.