Climate Change Solutions
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As all those who have the wisdom to follow the current democratic presidential primary race know, we will all be dead in just a few short years regardless of our current age or health. Spurred on by the results of the recent U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report, Democratic lawmakers have introduced aggressive and ambitious (if unrealistic) proposals to address climate change such as the Green New Deal and other policy proposals.¹ On the opposite side of the aisle, Republican lawmakers have either ignored the results of the U.N. Report or introduced proposals merely to ridicule or counter democratic efforts.² While both sides of the


political spectrum use the issue of climate change as a tool to rile up their bases, the issue continues unaddressed despite the fact that America has real-world examples from other countries on ways to move forward.

Despite the political theater from both parties, very few elected officials have any real proposals to address climate change and instead attack those whose efforts do not comport with their worldview. For example, democratic frontrunner Joe Biden unveiled what is currently one of the more detailed proposals for addressing climate change, and his entire plan was immediately denounced by Senator Bernie Sanders and Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio Cortez for not going far enough. This was despite the fact that Biden’s proposal was modeled after the policies of the Obama Administration, which took more steps than any other administration to address climate change. Elected officials’ rhetoric crucifies those seeking to develop realistic plans that can function within the current design of America’s energy situation and transition the U.S. into a more carbon-friendly system.

The fringe left wants nothing but pie in the sky policies that unrealistically promise to reduce America’s carbon emissions to zero within short timeframes. Those on the far right ignore current scientific consensus concerning anthropogenic climate change and focus narrow-mindedly on potential economic impacts, completely ignoring the fact that long-term climate change will impact economic growth severely. If America’s leaders are genuine in their desire to address climate change, those driving the debate on both sides need to come together and look at realistic examples of how America can lead the world in clean energy production and greenhouse gas emission reductions.

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Top personnel from the Obama Administration have called the goals outlined in proposals like the Green New Deal impossible. Rather, they advocate energy efficiency, increased nuclear and renewable energy, and improved carbon capture and storage technology. Any realistic plan to address climate change needs to have proposals for sources that produce consistent energy and can be adjusted to provide baseload demand as well as peak demand. Nuclear, geothermal, and hydro are the carbon-friendly sources that can meet baseload demands, but geothermal and hydro require specific regional characteristics such as thermal accessibility and water sources. Wind and solar, although lauded by environmental advocates, are intermittent sources that can only provide energy under certain conditions. Without significant advances in battery technology to store intermittent energy production, wind and solar cannot meet the nation’s baseload energy requirements.

The answer then seems fairly simple. Unless Americans are willing to relocate to areas that can be consistently powered through geothermal or hydro, accept power outages when the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing, or continue relying primarily on fossil fuels until battery or carbon capture technology advances, the answer is to shift energy production into nuclear power, supplemented by other clean energy sources.

An increase in nuclear energy within the U.S. is not a new idea. It has been discussed for years. Despite objections over the dangers of nuclear energy, countries like France have successfully implemented nuclear energy production and have an energy profile that is made up of only 10% fossil fuels. With nuclear as its principal energy source the French enjoy electricity costs at half of those in the U.S., emit only 1% of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions despite having the 7th

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largest economy (not to mention one of the lowest per capita greenhouse gas emissions among developed nations), and produce 70% of their energy with the safest type of energy production in the world.

Nuclear energy will surely bring its own challenges, but if the climate situation is truly as urgent as it appears the global community needs to drastically cut emissions in a short timeframe while still meeting growing energy demand. It seems as if nuclear energy is the best answer to a complicated and difficult situation. America has real-world examples and rational elected officials need to set aside political rhetoric and take real steps to address this issue.

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