

# As Climate Caucus hits milestone, hope for solutions gets closer



Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL) and Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-FL) co-chair the bipartisan Climate Solutions Caucus.

*With its ranks reaching 50 members, the bipartisan House Climate Solutions Caucus offers a viable pathway for legislation to reduce the carbon pollution that threatens the stability of our climate.*

Lost amid the recent headlines about the health care battle in Congress was heartening news that momentum is picking up to solve climate change: The [Climate Solutions Caucus](#) in the U.S. House of Representatives, which has equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats, has reached 50 members.

Since the start of the year, the caucus has more than tripled in size, reflecting a significant trend among members of Congress and the people they represent:

- Representatives from both sides of the aisle are tired of the dysfunction and gridlock on important issues like climate change and are looking for ways to break the impasse.
- More and more constituents are letting their representatives know that climate change is important to them, and they want to see Congress take action. Joining the caucus shows constituents that they are willing to take the first steps toward enacting solutions.

## QUICK LOOK

- The bipartisan House Climate Solutions Caucus has reached 50 members – 25 Republicans and 25 Democrats.
- Caucus is moving from recruitment to action, with members introducing and supporting climate-related legislation.
- The caucus was the force behind the rejection of an anti-climate amendment to a Defense bill on July 13.
- The climate solution worthy of consideration is Carbon Fee and Dividend, a market-based approach that enjoys support in conservative circles.

## Origins of the caucus

It did not take much convincing from constituents for Congressman Carlos Curbelo to step into the leadership void that existed on climate change less than two years ago. As a Republican who represents Miami and the Florida Keys, Curbelo is well aware of the damage rising seas and extreme weather are causing in his district, conditions that will become unmanageable in the decades ahead if steps are not taken to curb climate change. Together with Rep. Ted Deutch, a Democrat who also represents a coastal South Florida district, Curbelo formed the bipartisan House Climate Solutions Caucus in February of 2016. The caucus was conceived and launched as a place where Republicans and Democrats could come together to discuss climate change, seek common ground, and move solutions forward. Since its inception, and continuing into the current Congress, Curbelo and Deutch have insisted on real parity in the caucus between Republicans and Democrats, meaning that a representative from one party cannot join the caucus without someone from across the aisle coming on board at the same time. As a result, the caucus has 25 Republicans and 25 Democrats.

“Now 50 Members strong, the Climate Solutions Caucus is evidence that there is a growing, diverse, and bipartisan coalition of Members of Congress ready to put petty politics aside and find meaningful solutions to the challenges posed by sea level rise and climate change,” Curbelo said in a [press release](#). “We have a responsibility to our constituents and future generations to present a united front to combat anti-climate policies and to have a productive, fact-based dialogue about market-oriented solutions, investments, and innovations that could mitigate the effects of climate change and make our nation more resilient. I’m thankful to these new Members for joining our efforts. Together we are showing the American people that Members of Congress can work across party lines to improve quality of life in our communities and strengthen our great nation.”

The emergence and growth of the caucus is a refreshing change from the hyper-partisan atmosphere prevalent in our nation’s capital these days. One day after the shooting of Rep. Steve Scalise and others during a baseball practice in Alexandria, Va., South Carolina Republican Congressman Mark Sanford was asked on [MSNBC’s Morning Joe](#) how we could return to civility. This is what he said:

“We’ve got to find a way to dial this back. I would give an example of people trying to do that in a small way. There’s a Climate Solutions Caucus here in the Congress, and what they’ve said is that for every Democrat that goes on, you can’t get on unless there’s a Republican that goes with you. And I think there probably ought to be a little more pairing, whether it’s in a caucus form or whether it’s in legislative form here in Washington, and I think people are going to be looking for ways to do just that.”

That civility is being restored with one of the most toxic issues in America today – climate change – and that is nothing short of miraculous.

## From recruitment to action

As the caucus approaches the critical mass needed to enact solutions, the focus is gradually shifting from recruitment to action:

- In February, caucus members Tom Reed (R-NY) and Mike Thompson (D-CA) introduced the [Technologies for Energy Security Act](#) (H.R. 1090) to extend tax credits for, among other things, small-scale wind power and geothermal energy. Among the 96 cosponsors of this legislation are half the members of the Climate Solutions Caucus.
- In March, caucus members Elise Stefanik (R-NY), Carlos Curbelo (R-FL) and Ryan Costello (R-PA) introduced what is known as the [Republican Climate Resolution](#) (H. Res. 195), which acknowledges the consequences of climate change and calls for taking “meaningful and responsible action now.”
- In May, caucus members John Delaney (D-MD) and John Faso (R-NY) [introduced the Climate Solutions Commission Act](#) (H.R. 2326), which would establish a bipartisan panel to review “economically viable actions or policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions” and make recommendations to the president, Congress and states.
- Later in May, the caucus [held a public briefing](#) on the impact that climate change is having on coastal communities.
- Former Republican Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson met with members of the Climate Solutions Caucus on July 11 to discuss the economic impact of climate change and revenue-neutral carbon pricing.
- On July 13, caucus Republicans overwhelmingly [voted against an anti-climate amendment](#) to the Defense authorization bill, marking the first time that the caucus voted as a bloc to defeat such a measure.

## A promising solution

In joining the caucus, members are not required to back any specific climate policy. The mission of the caucus is to “educate members on economically-viable options to reduce climate risk and protect our nation’s economy, security, infrastructure, agriculture, water supply and public safety.”

One economically viable solution is to place a steadily-rising fee on the carbon content of fossil fuels and return the revenue from that fee to households. This market-based approach, known as [Carbon Fee and Dividend](#), would also place border adjustment tariffs on imports from nations that do not have a similar price on carbon, thereby maintaining a level playing field for American businesses.

The fee would start at \$15 per ton of carbon dioxide and increase by \$10 per ton each year. This sends a clear and predictable price signal to the market that would accelerate the transition to clean energy and provide the incentive for greater energy efficiency.

Returning the revenue to households would shield families – particularly low- and middle-income households – from the economic impact of rising energy costs associated with the

fee. A [study from Regional Economic Models, Inc.](#), shows that over 20 years this policy would reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 50 percent while adding 2.8 million jobs to the economy.

This approach, which corrects the market failure surrounding fossil fuels by making them accountable for their true cost to society, finds great support with conservatives and businesses throughout the U.S.

The [Climate Leadership Council](#), a group of Republican elder statesmen that boasts support from a number of corporations, including oil companies Shell, ExxonMobil and BP, has proposed a similar policy that was published earlier this year – [The Conservative Case for Carbon Dividends](#). Authors of that proposal include former Secretaries of State George Shultz and James Baker III. The Council’s chairman and CEO, Ted Halstead, has an excellent TED talk about this called a “[climate solution where all sides can win](#).” The Council’s proposal differs slightly from CCL’s proposal, calling for the fee to start at \$40 per ton and rising more slowly. The basic pillars of the two proposals, however, are the same:

- Fee on carbon-based fuels high enough to spur market changes leading to transition to clean energy sources.
- Returning all revenue to households to protect consumers from rising costs and prevent growth of government.
- Border adjustment tariffs to protect American businesses and provide incentive for other nations to follow our lead.

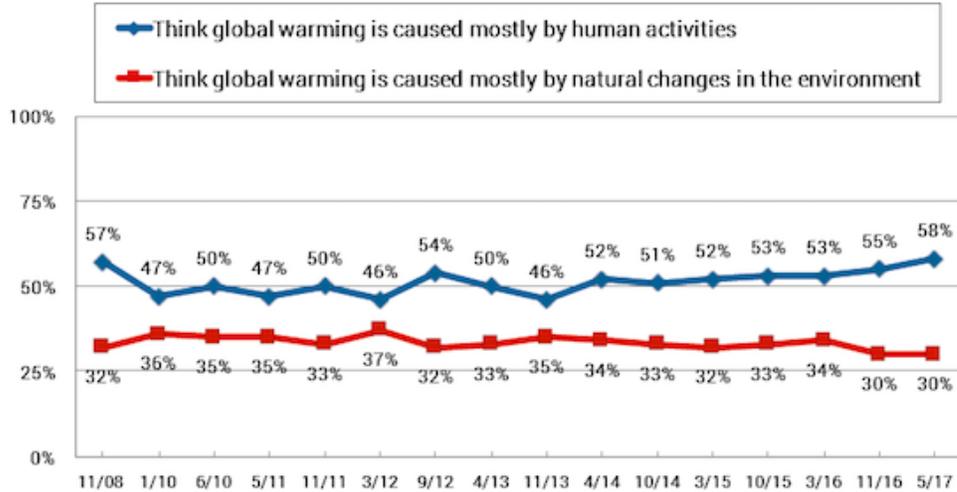
## **Political will is the key**

Will such legislation emerge from the Climate Solutions Caucus? It is still too early to answer that question. What we do know, however, is that members of Congress are sensitive to the wishes of constituents and community leaders in their districts. Political will is the key. As more and more people communicate their desire for an effective climate solution like Carbon Fee and Dividend, Congress edges closer to the tipping point to make it possible.

Another factor in political will is the shift in public opinion. The [Yale Program on Climate Change Communication](#), which conducts frequent surveys on the issue, recently reported that 58 percent of Americans say climate change is human caused, the highest level since Yale’s surveys started in 2008. See the graphic on the next page. This high level of acceptance comes despite great confusion among the public about the scientific consensus, whereby 97 percent of climate scientists are convinced that human-caused climate change is happening. The Yale survey found that only 13 percent of Americans are aware of this consensus, with most believing there is great debate among climate scientists on this issue. Knowing about this consensus would likely make public demand for congressional action overwhelming.

## More Than Half of Americans Think Global Warming Is Mostly Human Caused

- Highest percentage since survey began -



Assuming global warming is happening, do you think it is...  
 May 2017. Base: Americans 18+.



Democrats and Republicans in Congress are now talking to each other about solving climate change, a far cry from where we were two years ago. Despite public perception to the contrary, Congress ultimately responds to the will of the people, and many members of Congress have responded to the call for climate action by joining the Climate Solutions Caucus. As the Caucus celebrates the milestone of 50 members, let us look forward to what we hope will be the next significant milestone: The introduction of bipartisan legislation to bring down carbon pollution to levels that give future generations a chance for a livable world.

See a list of Climate Solutions Caucus, by state on the next page.

## Members of Climate Solutions Caucus by state

<b>California</b>	Mike Thompson	(D-CA-05)
	Jerry McNerney	(D-CA-09)
	Anna Eshoo	(D-CA-18)
	Jimmy Panetta	(D-CA-20)
	Salud Carbajal	(D-CA-24)
	Alan Lowenthal	(D-CA-47)
	Juan Vargas	(D-CA-51)
	Scott Peters	(D-CA-52)
	Darrell Issa	(R-CA-49)
	Steve Knight	(R-CA-25)
<b>Connecticut</b>	Jim Himes	(D-CT-04)
<b>Colorado</b>	Mike Coffman	(R-CO-06)
<b>Florida</b>	Charlie Crist	(D-FL-13)
	Ted Deutch	(D-FL-22)
	Brian Mast	(R-FL-18)
	Carlos Curbelo	(R-FL-26)
	Ileana Ros-Lehtinen	(R-FL-27)
<b>Illinois</b>	Daniel Lipinski	(D-IL-03)
	Rodney Davis	(R-IL-13)
<b>Massachusetts</b>	Seth Moulton	(D-MA-06)
<b>Maryland</b>	John Delaney	(D-MD-06)
<b>Minnesota</b>	Rick Nolan	(D-MN-08)
<b>Nebraska</b>	Don Bacon	(R-NE-02)
<b>Nevada</b>	Mark Amodei	(R-NV-02)
<b>New Hampshire</b>	Annie Kuster	(D-NH-02)
<b>New Jersey</b>	Leonard Lance	(R-NJ-07)

<b>New York</b>	Thomas Suozzi	(D-NY-03)
	Lee Zeldin	(R-NY-01)
	Peter King	(R-NY-02)
	John Faso	(R-NY-19)
	Elise Stefanik	(R-NY-21)
	Claudia Tenney	(R-NY-22)
	Tom Reed	(R-NY-23)
<b>Ohio</b>	David Joyce	(R-OH-14)
	Marcy Kaptur	(D-OH-09)
<b>Oregon</b>	Suzanne Bonamici	(D-OR-01)
	Earl Blumenauer	(D-OR-03)
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	Brendan Boyle	(D-PA-13)
	Matt Cartwright	(D-PA-17)
	Ryan Costello	(R-PA-06)
	Patrick Meehan	(R-PA-07)
	Brian Fitzpatrick	(R-PA-08)
<b>Utah</b>	Mia Love	(R-UT-04)
<b>Virginia</b>	Don Beyer	(D-VA-08)
	Scott Taylor	(R-VA-02)
	Barbara Comstock	(R-VA-10)
<b>Virgin Islands</b>	Stacey Plaskett	(D-VI-00)
<b>Vermont</b>	Peter Welch	(D-VT-00)
<b>Washington</b>	Dave Reichert	(R-WA-08)
<b>Wisconsin</b>	Mike Gallagher	(R-WI-08)

Source: Citizens' Climate Lobby Media  
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