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PARIS CLIMATE ACCORD WITHDRAWAL: SOME THINGS LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES CAN AGREE ON!

By Stephen L. Bakke  June 8, 2017



Set aside for the moment, philosophical and scientific climate change arguing. Withdrawing from the Paris Climate Accord brought “energy and the environment” back into the news. Since that agreement has plenty for both liberals and conservatives to be unhappy with, perhaps we will eventually see at least some bipartisan agreement.

Consider:

- The Accord was a treaty. The U.S. was an outlier by not bringing it to the Senate for approval, as is constitutionally required. Other countries did have it ratified.
- Trump could have taken the easy way out by submitting this agreement to the Senate for ratification where it was DOA. Trump thereby kept the concept of renegotiation alive.
- The U.S. already leads in CO2 emission improvement, even without any agreement.
- Several large countries are exempt from the agreement’s requirements until 2030, thereby effecting a “wealth transfer” from the U.S. to less developed economies – e.g. China and India. China already has the largest CO2 emissions.
- U.N. officials have, over the last decade been frequently quoted stating the real goal of these climate agreements would be massive wealth transfer.
- The Accord required voluntary obligations which were unenforceable. The U.S. would probably have complied, along with very few others. The result would not be in our best interest.
- The agreement directs the U.S. to deposit massive amounts of money into a “slush fund.” This “wealth transfer” provision would eliminate the opportunity for the U.S. to employ those funds in their own “clean energy” research and development. Who better to do it.
- Worldwide CO2 emission reduction will be heavily dependent on clean natural gas. The ideology of this agreement would not bode well for exploiting natural gas.
- For those who are against the use of coal, the agreement doesn’t introduce a quick reduction in coal production and usage. Rather, it eliminates coal usage in the U.S. and moves it to developing countries.
- The agreement doesn’t adequately exploit the potential for a nuclear solution. Nuclear energy is vital to any solution that makes dramatic reductions in CO2 emissions.
- U.S. energy independence is a priority for U.S. citizens. The Accord doesn’t have that as a priority.
- The only value of the Accord is the symbolic aspect of “standing together,” but without a predictable level of success.

There are other relevant realities that can help us move forward, including:

- Withdrawing from the Accord doesn't mean we are "doing nothing." We already lead the world in reducing CO2 emissions, and operating outside of the treaty ensures we can proceed more independently and effectively.
- We would not be "left behind" in clean energy development. In fact, this withdrawal permits us to independently lead research and development. No agreement is necessary.
- Withdrawing preserves our sovereignty in establishing our own environmental priorities.

Advantage has been gained that can be shared across the entire political spectrum. Bipartisan concern with numerous Accord provisions is warranted, and that could lead to eventual acceptance of the "Paris withdrawal." This would permit us to move on to more productive climate policies and programs.