

WELCOME TO CLIMATE TALKING POINTS

At ecoAmerica, we work with America's religious denominations, national health and medical associations, and local communities to support their efforts to understand the implications of climate change, and to develop effective strategies for them to practically support and advocate for solutions with their many millions of members. Our work starts with people – we do a lot of listening to truly understand their values, concerns, and priorities. **We've learned a lot, and will share what we've learned with you in this monthly Climate Talking Points series.**

Each month we will pick a topic or theme related to climate change, provide a few positive talking points and some responses to key questions or criticisms. Our goal is to open up the conversation, focus on common values, and help us all move forward, together, on climate solutions. This guidance is grounded in ecoAmerica's extensive research on climate communications, and our experience deploying it. See list and links below.

One note of caution: effective communication on climate change might sometimes conflict with what you think is "common sense." For instance, "Big Tent" Democrats think "we're all in this together" is an effective argument – but it doesn't resonate with more conservative Republicans. Conservatives trust faith leaders on climate change and don't understand why progressives would trust celebrities. In the end, the truly trusted messengers are the people in your family, of your faith, in your community, from your occupation – who tend to share the same political and social values as you do.

The leverage you have, besides living your values in an exemplary way, is that there are people in your circles who share your values, but who are not 'activated' on climate change. Use your connections, and this guidance, to reach out to your colleagues, community, and fellow congregants. **Reach common ground and take action. Each of us can make a big difference.**

ecoAmerica Climate Communications Research includes:

- [American Climate Values](#) research series
- [Connecting on Climate: A Guide to Effective Climate Communications](#)
- [15 Steps to Effective Climate Communications](#),
- The [Let's Talk Climate](#) research series including
 - [Let's Talk Health & Climate](#),
 - [Let's Talk Climate: Messages to Motivate Latino Americans](#),
 - [Let's Talk Faith & Climate](#), and
 - [Let's Talk Communities & Climate](#),
- The monthly [American Climate Perspectives Survey](#),
- The annual [American Climate Metrics Survey](#).

Reports, guides, and webinars on all these and more are available on our website: ecoAmerica.org. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions.

OPENING THE DISCUSSION

It can be hard to have a positive discussion on climate change. It is a complex issue. Many of us are in our ideological information bubbles or struck by seemingly conflicting information. **As we enter 2018, passions are high on both sides, and the stakes even higher.** If you want to move your family, colleagues, or community forward on the issue, what do you do?

How you talk about climate change is as important that the specifics of what you say. **You can have a positive conversation where everyone leaves more informed and more inspired on climate solutions if you start with common values, respect differences, listen well, and truly care about people.** A good example of how to do this (and how not to) is in this short video, a [Thanksgiving dinner discussion](#). Specific guidance is in ecoAmerica's [15 Steps to Effective Climate Communications](#). Here are talking points you can use to open the discussion:

1. ***We need to get America moving forward again.*** We are so polarized that it's hard to agree on problems or solutions. Our politics and politicians define and divide us.
2. ***Our differences should be a strength, not a weakness.*** We come up with great ideas and answers when we share our differing perspectives respectfully.
3. ***We all care about the same things: our children, health, & communities.*** We all know that clean air, clean water, and thriving nature around us keeps us healthy.
4. ***Burning coal and oil is not healthy for us or the nature around us.*** We have a moral responsibility to shift to clean energy like wind and solar.
5. ***It's hard to tell, year by year, but our seasons and weather are changing.*** It seems like there are more floods, droughts, and wildfires than ever before.
6. ***Most Americans want less pollution and more clean energy.*** Now the federal government wants to subsidize coal plants because they are no longer competitive.
7. ***We can create good paying, local jobs if we produce our own clean energy*** and use energy wisely. The world is shifting this way, and America is lagging behind.
8. ***We don't have to wait for politicians to sort things out.*** We can take action here at home, in our workplace and community – and start saving money now.
9. ***We can protect our climate and our community at the same time.*** Now that clean energy costs less than coal or oil, let's start investing in our future.

COUNTERPOINTS

Following are the current main arguments against shifting to clean energy or addressing climate change, along with suggested responses.

1. Our focus needs to be on energy security and economic development, both of which are hindered by efforts to combat climate change. Regulations are burdensome and restricting carbon-based energy in America will kill jobs and stifle economic growth.

Some of us are benefiting from economic development, and others are not. The economy is in its 9th year of growth, but are we getting more or better jobs? Our greatest energy security comes from generating all the energy we need at our own homes and in our own communities.

2. There is no renewable energy technology currently that can match the utility and scale of fossil fuels. Adding more variable, uncontrollable renewables to the grid will necessitate backup power from coal or natural gas to stabilize the mix.

That's certainly true if you look backwards. We can't shift our total energy system overnight. But clean energy is growing fast. Big companies, cities, even states and countries are going 100% renewable. Only companies and people that profit from pollution are doing what they can to slow down the trends now.

3. Administrative regulations like the Clean Power Plan exceed the powers of the executive branch and wrongly bypass Congress in creating policy. Policies must be authorized by Congress and not an administrative agency like EPA if our country is to remain a democracy.

Congress created the EPA to protect human health and our environment. The EPA is authorized, and the federal courts have agreed, that stopping fossil fuel pollution by getting big power plants to clean up their acts is what the EPA is supposed to do.

4. The scientific evidence on climate change is insufficient, and a growing body of literature suggests no link between human activity and our changing climate. 'Global warming' – the big scare story that the planet is heating up at a catastrophic unprecedented rate because of manmade CO₂ emissions – is bunk.

Even if you don't believe the science on climate change, it's clear that every country, every university, every large company – even the oil companies – are taking action to minimize the pollution caused by fossil fuels and gain the economic benefits of clean energy. We should too.