

MEMO Published August 16, 2019 • 4 minute read

Talking About the Climate Crisis



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Third Way is in the midst of a multi-round public opinion research project on climate change. Below is some guidance based on our initial findings, as well as other recent research conducted around this issue.

Tips

1. Make ambitious climate policies a part of your **core messaging**. Voters expect climate change to be dealt with within their children's lifetime. From voters in battleground states to some of the most progressive voters in the Democratic electorate, Americans want a candidate who pushes an aggressive federal climate plan.

2. Frame the conversation around **optimism and opportunity** rather than pessimism and sacrifice. Evoke confidence in American ingenuity and our ability to rise to the challenge.
3. When talking about transitioning to a clean energy economy, lead with **economic and job opportunities**. Help the public understand how this transition can benefit them.
4. Emphasize the opportunity to **build clean energy technologies at home and sell them abroad**. Use examples, like the potential for biojet fuel developed in the Midwest or offshore wind built and installed in the Great Lakes. And talk about the need for **new energy infrastructure projects** that will be built with well-paying union jobs
5. Highlight the important role **Middle America and rural communities** will play in clean energy technologies. This is being led by companies, innovators, and public universities across the Midwest and Great Plains, and not just on the coasts.
6. Say “**100% clean energy**” instead of “100% renewable energy.” We must use all zero-carbon technologies that can help us reach our climate goals.
7. Make your goal “**net-zero emissions by 2050** at the absolute latest” instead of “we only have 12 years to solve this crisis.” A positive frame is not only more appealing to more progressive voters, but it is also a winning message with battleground voters.
8. When talking about **fossil fuels**, emphasize that it is up to those companies to show if and how they can be part of getting to net zero emissions by 2050.
9. Focus on how the **core American values of hard work, adaptability, and ingenuity** enabled us to overcome great challenges in the past and can lead the world in transitioning to clean energy and addressing climate change today.
10. Say “**affordable and fair**” when describing the clean energy transition. This helps provides more clarity around issues of accessibility and costs.

Talking Points

- We have the **opportunity to revolutionize our economy** and become the global leader in clean energy. The rest of the world already knows climate change is here and is a problem. They buy clean energy systems that will solve it. Not only will we **build and deploy clean energy** here at home, we will sell it to other countries and international markets. We will regain American leadership on climate selling the world the next generation of clean energy technologies.

- The **clean energy economy will be built throughout America and particularly in the Great Lakes super-region**. This is where Americans have always grown and built things, and its home to some of our best public research universities. Silicon Valley may know apps and biotech, but the rest of the country knows how to invent, build, and grow the things we need to stop climate change and go clean.
- We are going to need to build a LOT of things - everything from roads and public transportation to large transmission lines, new cars, and even pipelines for carbon and hydrogen. This **massive infrastructure effort** will require a lot of workers, providing the opportunity for plenty of **well-paying union jobs**.
- The science is clear; our goal must be to reach **net-zero emissions by 2050** at the latest to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Eliminating carbon pollution from our economy is an enormous challenge that will require using **every clean energy technology** we have and inventing the ones we still need.
- We must get to net-zero carbon pollution by 2050 at the latest. If fossil **fuel companies** want to remain in business, it's *their* responsibility to develop fuels and other services that do not emit carbon or other greenhouse gases. One way to do this is **carbon capture**. Instead of stonewalling climate policy, fossil industries should invest more, support more federal investment, and back smart regulations. Let's face it; this is the only way they survive.
- There is no way around it. Getting to net-zero will entail a major transformation of our economy. That transformation must be **affordable and fair** for all Americans. That means ensuring costs do not fall on those who are least able to pay and ensuring no community is left behind in this transition.
- We can address climate change in a way that makes travel more convenient and cheaper, not less. We can make the products we purchase cleaner, more durable, and American-made. We can make the power we consume cleaner and more affordable. Are we going to live the same way in 10-20 years as we do today? Of course not. We are going to be living in a better, cleaner, more convenient society.