

Climate Change In Past Debates

Stats On Questions & Answers

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TOTALS:

Year	Debates (Including VP)	Unprompted Mentions of Climate Change	Moderator Questions on Climate Change	Audience Questions on Climate Change
2000	4	16	5	0
2004	4	5	0	1
2008	4	10	2 (VP debate only)	1
2012	4	12	0	0
2016	4	7	0	1
2020	2	7	10 (incl. 3 in VP debate)	0

QUICK FACTS

20 Years Ago: October 11, 2000 was the last time a moderator asked Presidential candidates questions about climate. The discussion lasted 10 minutes and 28 seconds and focused on a tradeoff between the environment and the economy.

12 Years Ago: October 2, 2008 was the last time a moderator asked Vice Presidential candidates about climate. The discussion lasted 5 minutes and 45 seconds, leading with a question on what is true or false about the causes of climate change.

This Year (So Far): During both the September 28, 2020 Presidential and October 7, 2020 Vice Presidential debates, moderators have asked candidates questions about climate. In the Presidential debate, the discussion lasted 10 minutes and 34 seconds, leading with a question on Trump's belief in the science behind climate change before pivoting to a discussion about the cost of Biden's climate agenda. In the Vice-Presidential debate, the discussion lasted 9 minutes and 59 seconds, leading with a question to Pence about extreme weather and climate change before pivoting to a discussion about the Biden-Harris campaign's position on the Green New Deal.

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2020**

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THE QUESTIONS

OCTOBER 11, 2000 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

5 Moderator Questions

[Debate Transcript](#)

Debate moderator Jim Lehrer asked Gore if he still believed that saving the planet must be the central organizing principle for civilization:

“JIM LEHRER: New question, new subject. Vice President Gore, on the environment. In your 1992 book you said, quote, ‘We must make the rescue of our environment the central organizing principle for civilization and there must be a wrenching transformation to save the planet.’ Do you still feel that way?”

Debate moderator Jim Lehrer continued to direct the question to Bush:

“JIM LEHRER: Governor?”

BUSH: Well, let me start with Texas. We are a big industrial state. We reduced our industrial waste by 11%. We cleaned up more brown fields than any other administration in my state's history, 450 of them. Our water is cleaner now.”

Debate moderator Jim Lehrer asked a follow up question about the candidates' stances on the environment.

“JIM LEHRER: Where do you see the basic difference in very simple terms in two or three sentences between you and the governor on the environment? If a voter wants to make a choice, what is it?”

Debate moderator Jim Lehrer mentioned the environment in a follow up question to Bush about the candidates' differences on the environment:

“JIM LEHRER: We've talked about supply. I just want to know for somebody — we're getting close to the end of our time here. If somebody wanted to vote on the environment, how would you draw the differences, Governor?”

Debate moderator Jim Lehrer mentioned the environment in a question to Bush about environmental regulations:

“JIM LEHRER: Would you believe the federal government still has some new rules and new regulations and new laws to pass in the environmental area or do you think —

BUSH: Sure, absolutely, so long as they're based upon science and they're reasonable. So long as people have input.”

Debate moderator Jim Lehrer mentioned global warming in a follow up question to Bush about environmental regulations:

“JIM LEHRER: Would you believe the federal government still has some new rules and new regulations and new laws to pass in the environmental area or do you think —

BUSH: Sure, absolutely, so long as they're based upon science and they're reasonable. So long as people have input.

JIM LEHRER: What about global warming?”

OCTOBER 8, 2004 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

1 Audience Question

[Debate Transcript](#)

An audience member asked Bush how he would rate himself as an environmentalist:

“HUBB: Mr. President, how would you rate yourself as an environmentalist? What specifically has your administration done to improve the condition of our nation's air and water supply?”

OCTOBER 2, 2008 VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

2 Moderator Questions

[Debate Transcript](#)

Debate moderator Gwen Ifill asked Palin about her belief in the causes of climate change:

“GWEN IFILL: Governor, I’m happy to talk to you in this next section about energy issues. Let’s talk about **climate change**. What is true and what is false about what we have heard, read, discussed, debated about the causes of **climate change?**”

Debate moderator Gwen Ifill continued to direct the question to Biden:

“GWEN IFILL: Senator, what is true and what is false about the causes?”

Debate moderator Gwen Ifill asked the Vice-Presidential candidates about their support for capping carbon emissions and clean coal:

“GWEN IFILL: We do need to keep within our two minutes. But I just wanted to ask you, do you support capping carbon emissions?”

PALIN: I do. I do.

GWEN IFILL: OK. And on the clean coal issue?

BIDEN: Absolutely. Absolutely we do. We call for setting hard targets, number one...”

OCTOBER 7, 2008 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

1 Audience Member Question

[Debate Transcript](#)

An audience member asked candidates what steps they would take to ensure Congress takes fast action on climate change and green jobs:

“QUESTION: Senator McCfain, I want to know, we saw that Congress moved pretty fast in the face of an economic crisis. I want to know what you would do within the first two years to make sure that Congress moves fast as far as environmental issues, like **climate change** and green jobs?”

OCTOBER 9, 2016 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

1 Audience Member Question

[Debate Transcript](#)

An audience member asked candidates about how their energy policy would balance the nation's energy needs with environmental impacts and jobs:

“QUESTION: What steps will your energy policy take to meet our energy needs, while at the same time remaining environmentally friendly and minimizing job loss for fossil power plant workers?”

SEPTEMBER 29, 2020 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

7 Moderator Questions

[Debate Transcript](#)

Debate moderator Chris Wallace mentioned climate change in a question asking Trump what he believes about the science behind climate change and his plans to address the issue:

“CHRIS WALLACE: You know, I'd like to talk about climate change. Okay, the forest fires in the West, are raging now. They have burned millions of acres. They have displaced hundreds of thousands of people. When state officials there blame the fires on climate change, Mr. President, you said, 'I don't think the science knows.' Over your four years, you have pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Climate accord. You have rolled back a number of Obama environmental records. What do you believe about the science of climate change? And what will you do in the next four years to confront it?”

Debate moderator Chris Wallace mentioned climate change and the Paris Climate Accord in a question asking Trump what he believes about the science behind climate change and his plans to address the issue:

“CHRIS WALLACE: You know, I'd like to talk about climate change. Okay, the forest fires in the West, are raging now. They have burned millions of acres. They have displaced hundreds of thousands of people. When state officials there blame the fires on climate change, Mr. President, you said, 'I don't think the science knows.' Over your four years, you have pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accord. You have rolled back a number of Obama

environmental records. What do you believe about the science of **climate change**? And what will you do in the next four years to confront it?"

Debate moderator Chris Wallace mentioned global warming in his second follow up question to Trump about his beliefs in the science of climate change:

"CHRIS WALLACE: Do you believe that human pollution, gashouse, greenhouse gas emissions contributes to the **global warming** of this planet?"

Debate moderator Chris Wallace mentioned climate change in a question to Trump about his decision to roll back the Clean Power Plan and fuel economy standards:

CHRIS WALLACE: But sir, if you believe in the science of **climate change**, why have you rolled back the Obama Clean Power Plan, which limited carbon emissions in power plants? Why have you relaxed --

TRUMP: Because it was driving energy prices through the sky --

CHRIS WALLACE: Why have you relaxed fuel economy standards that are going to create more pollution from cars?"

Debate moderator Chris Wallace mentioned green jobs and climate change in a question to Biden about his climate agenda:

"CHRIS WALLACE: Vice President Biden I'd like you to respond to the President's **climate change** record, but I also want to ask you about a concern. You proposed \$2 trillion in green jobs you talk about new limits, not abolishing, but new limits on fracking. Ending the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity by 2035. And zero, net emission of greenhouse gases by 2050. The president says, a lot of these things would tank the economy and cost millions of jobs."

In a follow up question, debate moderator Chris Wallace asked Biden about the cost of his climate plan:

"CHRIS WALLACE: What about the argument that President Trump basically says that you have to balance, environmental interests, and economic interests? And he's drawn a line [...] Let me -- Let me -- Wait a minute, sir. I actually have studied your plan, and it includes upgrading 4 million buildings, weatherizing 2 million homes over four years, building one and a half million energy efficient homes. So the question becomes, the president said, I think some people who support the president would say, 'That sounds like it's going to cost a lot of money and hurt the economy.'"

In a follow up question, debate moderator Chris Wallace asked Biden if he supported the Green New Deal:

“CHRIS WALLACE: But about the economy, and about this question of what it's going to cost. The Green New Deal and the idea of what, what your environmental changes to [...] **Do you support the Green New Deal?**”

OCTOBER 7, 2020 VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

3 Moderator Questions

[Debate Transcript](#)

Debate moderator Susan Page mentioned extreme weather and climate change in her question to Pence about his belief that man-made climate change is worsening climate disasters:

“SUSAN PAGE: Thank you very, very much, Vice President Pence. Once again you provided the perfect segue to a new topic, which is **climate change**. And Vice President Pence, I'd like to pose the first question to you. **This year we've seen record-setting hurricanes in the south. Another one, Hurricane Delta is now threatening the gulf. And we have seen record-setting wildfires in the West. Do you believe, as the scientific community has concluded, that man-made climate change has made wildfires bigger, hotter and more deadly? And it made hurricanes wetter, slower and more damaging?**”

Debate moderator Susan Page asked Harris where a Biden-Harris Administration would stand on the Green New Deal:

“SUSAN PAGE: Senator Harris, as the Vice President mentioned, you co-sponsored the Green New Deal in Congress, but Vice President Biden said in last week's debate that he does not support the Green New Deal. But if you look at the Biden Harris campaign website it describes the Green New Deal as a crucial framework. **What exactly would be the stance of a Biden Harris Administration toward the Green New Deal?**”

Debate moderator Susan Page asked Pence if he believed that climate change poses an existential threat:

“SUSAN PAGE: Senator Harris just said that **climate change** is an existential threat. **Vice President Pence, do you believe that climate change poses an existential threat?**”

2000

OCTOBER 3, 2000 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Gore mentioned the environment in response to a question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer about his comments questioning Bush's experience to be President:

“GORE: I have actually not questioned Governor Bush's experience. I have questioned his proposals. And here is why. I think this is a very important moment for our country. [...] I will make sure that we invest in our country and our families. **And I mean investing in education, health care, the environment, and middle-class tax cuts and retirement security. That is my agenda and that is why I think that it's not just a question of experience.**”

Gore mentioned the environment, clean energy, green technology and green jobs while responding to a question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer about preventing future oil price and supply problems:

“GORE: Now, in the short-term we have to free ourselves from the domination of the big oil companies that have the ability to manipulate the price from OPEC when they want to raise the price. **And in the long-term we have to give new incentives for the development of domestic resources like deep gas in the western Gulf, like stripper wells for oil, but also renewable sources of energy. And domestic sources that are cleaner and better. And I'm proposing a plan that will give tax credits and tax incentives for the rapid development of new kinds of cars and trucks and buses and factories and boilers and furnaces that don't have as much pollution, that don't burn as much energy, and that help us get out on the cutting edge of the new technologies that will create millions of new jobs.** Because, when we sell

these new products here, we'll then be able to sell them overseas. There is a ravenous demand for them overseas. Now, another big difference is Governor Bush is proposing to open up some of our most precious environmental treasures, like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for the big oil companies to go in and start producing oil there. I think that is the wrong choice. It would only give us a few months' worth of oil and the oil wouldn't start flowing for many years into the future. I don't think it's a fair price to pay to destroy precious parts of America's environment. We have to bet on the future and move beyond the current technologies to have a whole new generation of more efficient, cleaner, energy technology."

Bush mentioned clean energy while responding to a question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer about preventing future oil price and supply problems:

"BUSH: There's an interesting issue up in the northwest as well. Do we remove dams that produce hydroelectric energy? I'm against removing dams in the northwest. I don't know where the vice president stands but that's a renewable energy source of energy. We need to keep that in line."

Gore mentioned the environment in an exchange with Bush about oil and gas exploration:

"GORE: If I may just briefly, Jim, note. I found a couple of other things we agree upon. We may not find that many this evening, so I wanted to emphasize. I strongly support new investments in clean coal technology. I made a proposal three months ago on this. And also domestic exploration yes, but not in the environmental treasures of our country. We don't have to do that. That's the wrong choice. I know the oil companies have been itching to do that, but it is not the right thing for the future."

Bush mentioned the environment in an exchange with Gore about oil and gas exploration:

"BUSH: No. It's the right thing for the consumers. Less dependency upon foreign sources of crude is good for consumers. And we can do so in an environmentally friendly way."

Gore mentioned environmental protection in response to a question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer about if voters should see the election as a major choice between competing political philosophies:

"GORE: I think we have to make the right and responsible choices. I think we have to invest in education, protecting the environment, health care, a

prescription drug benefit that goes to all seniors, not just to the poor, under Medicare, not relying on HMOs and insurance companies.”

Gore mentioned the environment and green jobs in response to a question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer on the candidates' attitudes towards government intervention in the event of a crisis:

“GORE: Too many people have been left behind. We have got to do much more. The key is job training, education, investments in health care and education, environment, retirement security.”

OCTOBER 5, 2000 VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Cheney mentioned the environment in response to a question from debate moderator Bernard Shaw on oil pricing:

“CHENEY: We need to do a lot more about generating the capacity for power here at home. We need to get on with the business and we think we can do it very safely in an environmentally sound manner. We don't think we ought to buy into this false choice that somehow we cannot develop energy resources without being cautious with the environment.”

Cheney mentioned the environment in his argument for opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve to oil and gas exploration:

“CHENEY: The Arctic National Wildlife Reserve is one of them. It's on the north slope right next to Prudhoe Bay. The infrastructure is there to be able to deliver that product to market. We think we can do it given today's technology in a way that will not damage the environment, will not permanently marr the countryside at all, and so what we're looking for with respect to environmental policy and energy policy is balance. We do have to make choices, we recognize that. “

Lieberman mentioned clean energy, green technology and green jobs in response to a question from debate moderator Bernard Shaw on oil pricing:

“LIEBERMAN: The answer here is new technology that will create millions of new jobs. Let me just say this. If we can get three miles more per gallon from

our cars we'll get a — we'll save 1 million barrels of oil a day, which is exactly what the refuge at its best in Alaska would produce. The choice to me is clear. **We have to develop fuel cells, alternative energy, encourage people to conserve and to be efficient.**"

Lieberman mentioned environmental protection and in response to a question from debate moderator Bernard Shaw on what each candidate would bring to the office:

"LIEBERMAN: I have had extraordinary opportunities, thanks again to those folks back home in Connecticut, as a state senator, attorney general trying to enforce the law to protect them and the environment and consumers, and to litigate on behalf of humans rights. And for the last 12 years as a member of the Senate of the United States focusing on national security questions, environmental protection, economic growth and values."

OCTOBER 11, 2000 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Gore mentioned the environment in response to a question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer on the nation's obligations to overseas development assistance:

"GORE: I think that in the aftermath of the Cold War, it's time for us to do something very similar, to step up to the plate, to provide the leadership on the environment, leadership to make sure the world economy keeps moving in the right direction. Again, that means not running big deficits here and not squandering our surplus. It means having intelligent decisions that keep our prosperity going and shepherds that economic strength so that we can provide that leadership role."

Debate moderator Jim Lehrer asked Gore if he still believed that saving the planet must be the central organizing principle for civilization:

"JIM LEHRER: New question, new subject. Vice President Gore, on the environment. In your 1992 book you said, quote, 'We must make the rescue of our environment the central organizing principle for civilization and there

must be a wrenching transformation to save the planet.' Do you still feel that way?"

Gore mentioned climate change, clean energy and green jobs in response to a question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer about his belief that saving the planet must be the central organizing principle for civilization:

"GORE: I do. I think that in this 21st century we will soon see the consequences of what's called **global warming**. There was a study just a few weeks ago suggesting that in summertime the north polar ice cap will be completely gone in 50 years. Already many people see the strange weather conditions that the old timers say they've never seen before in their lifetimes. And what's happening is the level of pollution is increasing significantly. Now, here is the good news, Jim. **If we take the leadership role and build the new technologies, like the new kinds of cars and trucks that Detroit is itching to build, then we can create millions of good new jobs by being first into the market with these new kinds of cars and trucks and other kinds of technologies.** [...] I think that holding onto the old ways and the old argument that the environment and the economy are in conflict is really outdated. We have to be bold. We have to provide leadership. Now it's true that we disagree on this. The governor said that he doesn't think this problem is necessarily caused by people. He's for letting the oil companies into the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Houston has just become the smoggiest city in the country. And Texas is number one in industrial pollution. We have a very different outlook. **And I'll tell you this, I will fight for a clean environment in ways that strengthen our economy.**"

Debate moderator Jim Lehrer continued to direct the question to Bush:

"JIM LEHRER: Governor?"

BUSH: Well, let me start with Texas. We are a big industrial state. We reduced our industrial waste by 11%. We cleaned up more brown fields than any other administration in my state's history, 450 of them. Our water is cleaner now."

Bush mentioned the environment in response to a question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer on the issue:

"BUSH: **The book you mentioned that Vice President Gore wrote, he also called for taxing — big energy taxes in order to clean up the environment.** And now that the energy prices are high, I guess he's not advocating those big energy taxes right now. **I believe we ought to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund to — with half the money going to states so states can make the right decisions for environmental quality.** I think we need to

have clean coal technologies. I propose \$2 billion worth. By the way, I just found out the other day an interesting fact, that there is a national petroleum reserve right next to — in Prudhoe Bay that your administration opened up for exploration in that pristine area. And it was a smart move because there's gas reserves up there. We need gas pipelines to bring the gas down. Gas is a clean fuel that we can burn to — we need to make sure that if we decontrol our plants that there's mandatory — that the plants must conform to clean air standards, the grandfathered plants, that's what we did in Texas. No excuses. You must conform. **In other words, there are practical things we can do. But it starts with working in a collaborative effort with states and local folks. If you own the land, every day is Earth Day. People care a lot about their land and care about their environment.** Not all wisdom is in Washington, D.C. on this issue."

Debate moderator Jim Lehrer asked a follow up question about the candidates' stances on the environment.

"JIM LEHRER: **Where do you see the basic difference in very simple terms in two or three sentences between you and the governor on the environment? If a voter wants to make a choice, what is it?**"

Gore mentioned global warming and clean energy in response to a follow up question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer about the candidates' differences on the environment:

"GORE: **I'm really strongly committed to clean water and clean air, and cleaning up the new kinds of challenges like global warming.** He is right that I'm not in favor of energy taxes. **I am in favor of tax cuts to encourage and give incentives for the quicker development of these new kinds of technologies.** And let me say again, Detroit is rearing to go on that. We differ on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, as I have said. We differ on whether or not pollution controls ought to be voluntary. I don't think you can — I don't think you can get results that way. We differ on the kinds of appointments that we would make."

Debate moderator Jim Lehrer mentioned the environment in a follow up question to Bush about the candidates' differences on the environment:

"JIM LEHRER: We've talked about supply. I just want to know for somebody — we're getting close to the end of our time here. **If somebody wanted to vote on the environment, how would you draw the differences, Governor?**"

Debate moderator Jim Lehrer mentioned the environment in a question to Bush about environmental regulations:

JIM LEHRER: Would you believe the federal government still has some new rules and new regulations and new laws to pass in the environmental area or do you think —

BUSH: Sure, absolutely, so long as they're based upon science and they're reasonable. So long as people have input."

Debate moderator Jim Lehrer mentioned global warming in a follow up question to Bush about environmental regulations:

JIM LEHRER: Would you believe the federal government still has some new rules and new regulations and new laws to pass in the environmental area or do you think —

BUSH: Sure, absolutely, so long as they're based upon science and they're reasonable. So long as people have input.

JIM LEHRER: What about global warming?"

Bush mentioned global warming in response to a follow up question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer about the candidates' differences on the environment:

JIM LEHRER: What about global warming?

BUSH: I think it's an issue that we need to take very seriously. But I don't think we know the solution to global warming yet. And I don't think we've got all the facts before we make decisions. I tell you one thing I'm not going to do is I'm not going to let the United States carry the burden for cleaning up the world's air. Like Kyoto Treaty would have done. China and India were exempted from that treaty. I think we need to be more even-handed, as evidently 99 senators — I think it was 99 senators supported that position."

Gore mentioned global warming and the environment in response to Bush's remarks about global warming and the Kyoto Treaty:

GORE: Well, that vote wasn't exactly — a lot of the supporters of the Kyoto Treaty actually ended up voting for that because the way it was worded. But there's no doubt there's a lot of opposition to it in the Senate. [...] **But I disagree that we don't know the cause of global warming. I think that we do. It's pollution, carbon dioxide, and other chemicals that are even more potent, but in smaller quantities, that cause this. Look, the world's temperature is going up, weather patterns are changing, storms are getting more violent and unpredictable.** What are we going to tell our children? I'm a grandfather now. I want to be able to tell my grandson when I'm in my later years that I didn't turn away from the evidence that showed that we were doing some

serious harm. In my faith tradition, it is — it's written in the book of Matthew, 'Where your heart is, there is your treasure also.' **And I believe that — that we ought to recognize the value to our children and grandchildren of taking steps that preserve the environment in a way that's good for them.**"

Bush mentioned global warming in response to Gore's remarks about the science showing the cause of climate change:

"BUSH: Yeah, I agree. **I just — I think there has been — some of the scientists, I believe, Mr. Vice President, haven't they been changing their opinion a little bit on global warming?** A profound scientist recently made a different —"

Bush mentioned global warming and the environment in his argument that the science on climate change was not settled:

"BUSH: What the heck. I — of course there's a lot — look, **global warming needs to be taken very seriously, and I take it seriously. But science, there's a lot — there's differing opinions.** And before we react, I think it's best to have the full accounting, full understanding of what's taking place. **And I think to answer your question, I think both of us care a lot about the environment. We may have different approaches.**"

OCTOBER 17, 2000 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Gore mentioned environmental protection in response to an audience member's question about agriculture policy:

"GORE: I want to restore a meaningful safety net. **And I think that you pointed the way in your comments, because when you say there are multiple things accomplished by farmers, you're specifically including conservation and protection of the environment. And yes, farmers are the first environmentalists.** And when they decide not to plow a field that is vulnerable to soil erosion, that may cost them a little money, but it helps the environment. I think that we ought to have an expanded conservation reserve program. And I think that the environmental benefits that come from sound management of the land ought to represent a new way for farmers to get some income that will enable them — enable you to make sensible choices in crop rotation, and when you leave the land fallow and the rest."

Gore mentioned environmental protection in response to an audience member's question about keeping his pledges in office:

"GORE: Here are some promises that I'll make to you now. I will balance the budget every year. I will pay down the debt every year. I will give middle-class Americans tax cuts, meaningful ones. **And I will invest in education, health care, protecting the environment and retirement security.** We both made promises in this campaign. I promise you I will keep mine. Let me tell you about one of the governor's."

2004

SEPTEMBER 30, 2004 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

There were zero mentions or questions mentioning climate, the environment, or associated topics in the September 30, 2004 Presidential debate.

OCTOBER 5, 2004 VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

There were zero mentions or questions mentioning climate, the environment, or associated topics in the October 5, 2004 Vice Presidential debate.

OCTOBER 8, 2004 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

An audience member asked Bush how he would rate himself as an environmentalist:

“HUBB: Mr. President, how would you rate yourself as an environmentalist? What specifically has your administration done to improve the condition of our nation’s air and water supply?”

Bush mentioned the environment, green technology and clean energy in response to an audience member’s question about his environmental record:

“BUSH: We’ve got a good, common-sense policy. Now, I’m going to tell you what I really think is going to happen over time is technology is going to change the way we live for the good for the environment. That’s why I proposed a hydrogen automobile — hydrogen-generated automobile. We’re spending \$1 billion to come up with the technologies to do that. That’s why I’m a big proponent of clean coal technology, to make sure we can use coal but in a clean way. I guess you’d say I’m a good steward of the land. The quality of the air’s cleaner since I’ve been the president. Fewer water

complaints since I've been the president. More land being restored since I've been the president."

Kerry mentioned the environment and global warming in response to Bush's answer to an audience member's question on the President's environmental record:

"KERRY: Boy, to listen to that — the president, I don't think, is living in a world of reality with respect to the environment. [...] Now, when it comes to the issue of the environment, this is one of the worst administrations in modern history. The Clear Skies bill that he just talked about, it's one of those Orwellian names you pull out of the sky, slap it onto something, like "No Child Left Behind" but you leave millions of children behind. Here they're leaving the skies and the environment behind. If they just left the Clean Air Act all alone the way it is today, no change, the air would be cleaner than it is if you pass the Clear Skies act. We're going backwards. In fact, his environmental enforcement chief air-quality person at the EPA resigned in protest over what they're doing to what they are calling the new source performance standards for air quality. They're going backwards on the definition for wetlands. They're going backwards on the water quality. They pulled out of the global warming, declared it dead, didn't even accept the science. I'm going to be a president who believes in science."

Bush mentioned the environment, green technology, and the Kyoto Treaty in response to Kerry's remarks about the President's environmental record:

"BUSH: Well, had we joined the Kyoto treaty, which I guess he's referring to, it would have cost America a lot of jobs. It's one of these deals where, in order to be popular in the halls of Europe, you sign a treaty. But I thought it would cost a lot — I think there's a better way to do it. And I just told you the facts, sir. The quality of the air is cleaner since I've been the president of the United States. And we'll continue to spend money on research and development, because I truly believe that's the way to get from how we live today to being able to live a standard of living that we're accustomed to and being able to protect our environment better, the use of technologies."

Bush mentioned the environment and green technology in response to an audience member's question about jobs:

"BUSH: The best way to keep jobs here in America is, one, have an energy plan. I proposed one to the Congress two years ago, encourages conservation, encourages technology to explore for environmentally friendly ways for coal — to use coal and gas. It encourages the use of renewables like ethanol and biodiesel."

Kerry mentioned environmental protection in his closing statement:

“KERRY: I have a plan to protect the environment so that we leave this place in better shape to our children than we were handed it by our parents. That’s the test. I believe America’s best days are ahead of us. I’m an optimist, but we have to make the right choices, to be fiscally responsible and to create the new jobs of the future. We can do this.”

OCTOBER 13, 2004 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Kerry mentioned the environment in response to a question from debate moderator Bob Schieffer about Catholic archbishops opposing his campaign:

“KERRY: My faith affects everything that I do, in truth. There’s a great passage of the Bible that says, ‘What does it mean, my brother, to say you have faith if there are no deeds? Faith without works is dead.’ And I think that everything you do in public life has to be guided by your faith, affected by your faith, but without transferring it in any official way to other people. That’s why I fight against poverty. That’s why I fight to clean up the environment and protect this earth. That’s why I fight for equality and justice. All of those things come out of that fundamental teaching and belief of faith.”

2008

SEPTEMBER 26, 2008 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

McCain mentioned climate change and clean energy while responding to a question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer about the financial bailout and a proposed freeze on spending:

“MCCAIN: We have to have wind, tide, solar, natural gas, flex fuel cars and all that but we also have to have offshore drilling and we also have to have nuclear power. Senator Obama opposes both storing and reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel. You can't get there from here and the fact is that we can create 700,000 jobs by building constructing 45 new nuclear power plants by the year 2030. Nuclear power is not only important as far as eliminating our dependence on foreign oil but it's also responsibility as far as climate change is concerned. An issue I have been involved in for many, many years and I'm proud of the work of the work that I've done there along with Senator Clinton.”

McCain mentioned climate change while responding to Obama's charge that he supported President Bush 90% of the time:

“MCCAIN: It's well-known that I have not been elected Miss Congeniality in the United States Senate nor with the administration. I have opposed the president on spending, on climate change, on torture of prisoner, on – on Guantanamo Bay. On a — on the way that the Iraq War was conducted. I have a long record and the American people know me very well and that is independent and a maverick of the Senate and I'm happy to say that I've got a partner that's a good maverick along with me now.”

Obama mentioned climate change and investments in clean energy in response to a question about the candidates' priorities for paying for the financial rescue plan:

“OBAMA: What we're going to have to do is to approach it through alternative energy, like solar, and wind, and biodiesel, and, yes, nuclear energy, clean-coal technology. And, you know, I've got a plan for us to make a significant investment over the next 10 years to do that. And I have to say, Senator

McCain and I, I think agree on the importance of energy, but Senator McCain mentioned earlier the importance of looking at a record. Over 26 years, Senator McCain voted 23 times against alternative energy, like solar, and wind, and biodiesel. And so we — we — we've got to walk the walk and not just talk the talk when it comes to energy independence, because this is probably going to be just as vital for our economy and the pain that people are feeling at the pump — and, you know, winter's coming and home heating oil — as it is our national security and the issue of **climate change** that's so important."

Both McCain mentioned clean energy in an exchange following Obama's claim that he voted against alternative energy:

"MCCAIN: No one from Arizona is against solar. And Senator Obama says he's for nuclear, but he's against reprocessing and he's against storing. So...

OBAMA: That's just not true, John. John, I'm sorry, but that's not true."

McCain mentioned clean energy in an exchange on nuclear waste and alternate energy:

"OBAMA: I — I just have to correct the record here. I have never said that I object to nuclear waste. What I've said is that we have to store it safely.

And, Senator McCain, he says — he talks about Arizona.

JIM LEHRER: All right.

OBAMA: I've got to make this point, Jim.

JIM LEHRER: OK.

OBAMA: He objects...

MCCAIN: I have voted for alternate fuel all of my time...

OBAMA: He — he — he objects...

(CROSSTALK)

JIM LEHRER: One at a time, please.

OBAMA: He objected...

JIM LEHRER: One at a time.

MCCAIN: No one can be opposed to alternate energy.”

OCTOBER 2, 2008 VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Debate moderator Gwen Ifill asked Palin about her belief in the causes of climate change:

“GWEN IFILL: Governor, I’m happy to talk to you in this next section about energy issues. **Let’s talk about climate change. What is true and what is false about what we have heard, read, discussed, debated about the causes of climate change?**”

Debate moderator Gwen Ifill continued to direct the question to Biden:

“GWEN IFILL: Senator, what is true and what is false about the causes?”

Palin mentioned climate change and alternate energy sources in response to a question on the issue from Gwen Ifill:

“PALIN: Yes. Well, as the nation’s only Arctic state and being the governor of that state, Alaska feels and sees impacts of **climate change** more so than any other state. And we know that it’s real. I’m not one to attribute every man — activity of man to the changes in the climate. There is something to be said also for man’s activities, but also for the cyclical temperature changes on our planet. But there are real changes going on in our climate. And I don’t want to argue about the causes. What I want to argue about is, how are we going to get there to positively affect the impacts?”

We have got to clean up this planet. We have got to encourage other nations also to come along with us with the impacts of **climate change**, what we can do about that.

As governor, I was the first governor to form a **climate change** sub-cabinet to start dealing with the impacts. We’ve got to reduce emissions. John McCain is right there with an ‘all of the above’ approach to deal with **climate change** impacts.

We've got to become energy independent for that reason. Also as we rely more and more on other countries that don't care as much about the climate as we do, we're allowing them to produce and to emit and even pollute more than America would ever stand for. **So even in dealing with climate change, it's all the more reason that we have an 'all of the above' approach, tapping into alternative sources of energy and conserving fuel, conserving our petroleum products and our hydrocarbons so that we can clean up this planet and deal with climate change."**

Biden mentioned climate change in response to a question on the issue from debate moderator Gwen Ifill:

"GWEN IFILL: Senator, what is true and what is false about the causes?

BIDEN: Well, I think it is manmade. I think it's clearly manmade. And, look, this probably explains the biggest fundamental difference between John McCain and Barack Obama and Sarah Palin and Joe Biden — Governor Palin and Joe Biden.

If you don't understand what the cause is, it's virtually impossible to come up with a solution. We know what the cause is. The cause is manmade. That's the cause. That's why the polar icecap is melting."

Biden mentioned clean energy and green jobs in response to a question on climate change from debate moderator Gwen Ifill:

"BIDEN: Now, let's look at the facts. We have 3 percent of the world's oil reserves. We consume 25 percent of the oil in the world. **John McCain has voted 20 times in the last decade-and-a-half against funding alternative energy sources, clean energy sources, wind, solar, biofuels.** The way in which we can stop the greenhouse gases from emitting. We believe — Barack Obama believes by investing in clean coal and safe nuclear, **we can not only create jobs in wind and solar here in the United States, we can export it."**

Debate moderator Gwen Ifill asked the Vice-Presidential candidates about their support for capping carbon emissions and clean coal:

"**GWEN IFILL: We do need to keep within our two minutes. But I just wanted to ask you, do you support capping carbon emissions?**

PALIN: I do. I do.

GWEN IFILL: OK. And on the clean coal issue?

BIDEN: Absolutely. Absolutely we do. We call for setting hard targets, number one..."

Biden mentioned global warming in response to debate moderator Gwen Ifill's question about capping carbon emissions and clean coal:

"GWEN IFILL: On clean coal.

BIDEN: Oh, on clean coal. My record, just take a look at the record. My record for 25 years has supported clean coal technology. A comment made in a rope line was taken out of context. I was talking about exporting that technology to China so when they burn their dirty coal, it won't be as dirty, it will be clean. **But here's the bottom line, Gwen: How do we deal with global warming with continued addition to carbon emissions? And if the only answer you have is oil, and John — and the governor says John is for everything.** Well, why did John vote 20 times? Maybe he's for everything as long as it's not helped forward by the government. Maybe he's for everything if the free market takes care of it. I don't know. But he voted 20 times against funding alternative energy sources."

OCTOBER 7, 2008 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

McCain mentioned climate change in response to an audience question about the public trusting the major parties after the global financial crash:

"MCCAIN: Well, Theresa (ph), thank you. And I can see why you feel that cynicism and mistrust, because the system in Washington is broken. And I have been a consistent reformer. **I have advocated and taken on the special interests, whether they be the big money people by reaching across the aisle and working with Senator Feingold on campaign finance reform, whether it being a variety of other issues, working with Senator Lieberman on trying to address climate change.**"

An audience member asked candidates what steps they would take to ensure Congress takes fast action on climate change and green jobs:

"QUESTION: Senator McCain, I want to know, we saw that Congress moved pretty fast in the face of an economic crisis. **I want to know what you would**

do within the first two years to make sure that Congress moves fast as far as environmental issues, like **climate change** and green jobs?"

McCain mentioned climate change in response to an audience member's question about what steps he would take on environmental issues:

"MCCAIN: Well, thank you. Look, we are in tough economic times; we all know that. And let's keep — never forget the struggle that Americans are in today. But when we can — when we have an issue that we may hand our children and our grandchildren a damaged planet, I have disagreed strongly with the Bush administration on this issue. **I traveled all over the world looking at the effects of greenhouse gas emissions, Joe Lieberman and I.** And I introduced the first legislation, and we forced votes on it. That's the good news, my friends. The bad news is we lost. **But we kept the debate going, and we kept this issue to — to posing to Americans the danger that climate change opposes."**

McCain mentioned alternative energy and green jobs in response to a question from an audience member about what steps he would take on environmental issues:

"MCCAIN: **We can move forward, and clean up our climate, and develop green technologies, and alternate — alternative energies for — for hybrid, for hydrogen, for battery-powered cars, so that we can clean up our environment and at the same time get our economy going by creating millions of jobs."**

Obama mentioned clean energy and green jobs in response to an audience member's question about what steps he would take on environmental issues:

"OBAMA: This is one of the biggest challenges of our times. **And it is absolutely critical that we understand this is not just a challenge, it's an opportunity, because if we create a new energy economy, we can create five million new jobs, easily, here in the United States.** It can be an engine that drives us into the future the same way the computer was the engine for economic growth over the last couple of decades. And we can do it, but we're going to have to make an investment. The same way the computer was originally invented by a bunch of government scientists who were trying to figure out, for defense purposes, how to communicate, we've got to understand that this is a national security issue, as well. **And that's why**

we've got to make some investments and I've called for investments in solar, wind, geothermal."

Obama mentioned the climate crisis and global warming in response to an audience member's question about what steps he would take on environmental issues:

"OBAMA: So what that means is that we can't simply drill our way out of the problem. And we're not going to be able to deal with the climate crisis if our only solution is to use more fossil fuels that create global warming."

Obama mentioned clean energy technology in response to a question from debate moderator Bob Schieffer on reducing the nation's dependence on foreign oil:

"OBAMA: And let's take the example of energy, which we already spoke about. There is going to be the need for each and every one of us to start thinking about how we use energy. [...] But each and every one of us can start thinking about how can we save energy in our homes, in our buildings. And one of the things I want to do is make sure that we're providing incentives so that you can buy a fuel efficient car that's made right here in the United States of America, not in Japan or South Korea, making sure that you are able to weatherize your home or make your business more fuel efficient."

OCTOBER 15, 2008 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

McCain mentioned climate change during an exchange with Obama following a question from debate moderator Bob Schieffer about balancing the federal budget:

"MCCAIN: OK. But it's very clear that I have disagreed with the Bush administration. I have disagreed with leaders of my own party. I've got the scars to prove it. Whether it be bringing climate change to the floor of the Senate for the first time. Whether it be opposition to spending and earmarks, whether it be the issue of torture, whether it be the conduct of the war in Iraq, which I vigorously opposed. Whether it be on fighting the pharmaceutical companies on Medicare prescription drugs, importation. Whether it be fighting for an HMO patient's bill of rights. Whether it be the establishment of the 9/11 Commission."

McCain mentioned climate change in response to a question from debate moderator Bob Schieffer about foreign oil imports:

“BOB SCHIEFFER: Let's go to — let's go to a new topic. We're running a little behind. Let's talk about energy and climate control. Every president since Nixon has said what both of you...

MCCAIN: Climate change.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Climate change, yes — has said what both of you have said, and, that is, we must reduce our dependence on foreign oil. When Nixon said it, we imported from 17 to 34 percent of our foreign oil. Now, we're importing more than 60 percent. Would each of you give us a number, a specific number of how much you believe we can reduce our foreign oil imports during your first term?”

Obama mentioned alternate energy in response to a question from debate moderator Bob Schieffer on reducing foreign oil imports:

“OBAMA: That's why I've focused on putting resources into solar, wind, biodiesel, geothermal. These have been priorities of mine since I got to the Senate, and it is absolutely critical that we develop a high fuel efficient car that's built not in Japan and not in South Korea, but built here in the United States of America. We invented the auto industry and the fact that we have fallen so far behind is something that we have to work on.”

2012

OCTOBER 3, 2012 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Obama mentioned clean energy in response to a question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer following remarks from Romney about 'trickle-down' government:

"OBAMA: On energy, Governor Romney and I, we both agree that we've got to boost American energy production, and oil and natural gas production are higher than they've been in years. **But I also believe that we've got to look at the energy sources of the future, like wind and solar and biofuels, and make those investments.**"

Romney mentioned green energy during an exchange with Obama on tax breaks for oil and energy companies:

"ROMNEY: First of all, the Department of Energy has said the tax break for oil companies is \$2.8 billion a year. And it's actually an accounting treatment, as you know, that's been in place for a hundred years. Now...

OBAMA: It's time to end it.

ROMNEY: And in one year, you provided \$90 billion in breaks to the green energy world. Now, I like green energy as well, but that's about 50 years' worth of what oil and gas receives. And you say Exxon and Mobil. Actually, this \$2.8 billion goes largely to small companies, to drilling operators and so forth. [...] **But don't forget, you put \$90 billion, like 50 years' worth of breaks, into — into solar and wind, to Solyndra and Fisker and Tester and Ener1.** I mean, I had a friend who said you don't just pick the winners and losers, you pick the losers, all right? So this — this is not — this is not the kind of policy you want to have if you want to get America energy secure."

Romney mentioned green jobs in an exchange with Obama following a question from debate moderator Jim Lehrer on education:

"ROMNEY: But you make a very good point, which is that the place you put your money just makes a pretty clear indication of where your heart is. **You put \$90 billion into — into green jobs. And I — look, I'm all in favor of green energy.** \$90 billion, that would have — that would have hired 2 million teachers. \$90 billion."

OCTOBER 11, 2012 VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Ryan mentioned green jobs in response to a question from debate moderator Martha Raddatz about lowering the national unemployment rate:

“RYAN: That’s what our entire premise of our pro-growth plan for a stronger middle class is all about: getting the economy growing at 4 percent, creating 12 million jobs over the next four years. Look at just the \$90 billion in stimulus. **The vice president was in charge of overseeing this. \$90 billion in green pork to campaign contributors and special interest groups.** There are just at the Department of Energy over 100 criminal investigations that have been launched into just how stimulus...”

Biden mentioned green jobs during an exchange with Ryan about the economic stimulus:

“BIDEN: Let me tell you what was a good idea. It was a good idea, Moody’s and others said that this was exactly what we needed to stop this from going off the cliff. It set the conditions to be able to grow again. **We have, in fact, 4 percent of those green jobs didn’t go under — went under, didn’t work. It’s a better batting average than investment bankers have. They have about a 40 percent...**

RYAN: Where are the 5 million green jobs that were being...”

OCTOBER 16, 2012 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Obama mentioned green jobs in response to a question from debate moderator Candy Crowley about gas prices:

“OBAMA: So, I’m all for pipelines. I’m all for oil production. What I’m not for is us ignoring the other half of the equation. So, for example, on wind energy, when Governor Romney says ‘these are imaginary jobs.’ **When you’ve got thousands of people right now in Iowa, right now in Colorado, who are**

working, creating wind power with good-paying manufacturing jobs, and the Republican senator in that — in Iowa is all for it, providing tax breaks (ph) to help this work and Governor Romney says I'm opposed. I'd get rid of it. That's not an energy strategy for the future. And we need to win that future. And I intend to win it as President of the United States."

Obama mentioned green energy in response to an audience member's question about gas prices:

"OBAMA: Now, Governor Romney will say he's got an all-of-the-above plan, but basically his plan is to let the oil companies write the energy policies. So he's got the oil and gas part, but he doesn't have the clean energy part. And if we are only thinking about tomorrow or the next day and not thinking about 10 years from now, we're not going to control our own economic future. Because China, Germany, they're making these investments. And I'm not going to cede those jobs of the future to those countries. I expect those new energy sources to be built right here in the United States."

Obama mentioned clean energy in response to an audience member's question about job security:

"OBAMA: Number three, we've got to control our own energy. Now, not only oil and natural gas, which we've been investing in; but also, we've got to make sure we're building the energy source of the future, not just thinking about next year, but ten years from now, 20 years from now. That's why we've invested in solar and wind and biofuels, energy efficient cars."

Romney mentioned clean energy in response to a question from debate moderator Candy Crowley about gas prices:

"ROMNEY: Look, I want to make sure we use our oil, our coal, our gas, our nuclear, our renewables. I believe very much in our renewable capabilities; ethanol, wind, solar will be an important part of our energy mix."

OCTOBER 22, 2012 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Obama mentioned clean energy in response to a question from debate moderator Bob Schieffer about foreign policy:

"OBAMA: Doing everything we can to control our own energy. We've cut our oil imports to the lowest level in two decades because we've developed oil

and natural gas. But we also have to develop clean energy technologies that will allow us to cut our exports in half by 2020. That's the kind of leadership that we need to show."

Obama mentioned clean energy in response to a question from debate moderator Bob Schieffer directed to Romney about a potential trade war with China:

"OBAMA: And if we're not making investments in education and basic research, which is not something that the private sector is doing at a sufficient pace right now and has never done, then we will lose the (inaudible) in things like clean energy technology."

Obama mentioned clean energy in his closing debate remarks:

"OBAMA: I want to make sure we've got the best education system in the world. And we're retaining our workers for the jobs of tomorrow. I want to control our own energy by developing oil and natural gas but also the energy sources of the future."

2016

SEPTEMBER 26, 2016 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Clinton mentioned clean energy and green jobs in response to a question from debate moderator Lester Holt about the candidates' jobs plans:

"CLINTON: First, we have to build an economy that works for everyone, not just those at the top. That means we need new jobs, good jobs, with rising incomes. I want us to invest in you. I want us to invest in your future. That means jobs in infrastructure, in advanced manufacturing, innovation and technology, clean, renewable energy, and small business, because most of the new jobs will come from small business."

Clinton mentioned climate change in response to a question from debate moderator Lester Holt about how to bring back American manufacturing jobs:

"CLINTON: They've looked at my plans and they've said, OK, if we can do this, and I intend to get it done, we will have 10 million more new jobs, because we will be making investments where we can grow the economy. Take clean energy. Some country is going to be the clean- energy superpower of the 21st century. Donald thinks that climate change is a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese. I think it's real."

Clinton mentioned clean energy in an exchange with Trump in response to debate moderator Lester Holt's question about bringing back American manufacturing jobs:

"CLINTON: I think science is real. TRUMP: I do not say that. CLINTON: And I think it's important that we grip this and deal with it, both at home and abroad. And here's what we can do. We can deploy a half a billion more solar panels. We can have enough clean energy to power every home. We can build a new modern electric grid. That's a lot of jobs; that's a lot of new economic activity."

Trump mentioned clean energy in response to debate moderator Lester Holt's question about bringing back American manufacturing jobs:

"LESTER HOLT: Mr. Trump? TRUMP: She talks about solar panels. We invested in a solar company, our country. That was a disaster. They lost

plenty of money on that one. Now, look, I'm a great believer in all forms of energy, but we're putting a lot of people out of work. Our energy policies are a disaster. Our country is losing so much in terms of energy, in terms of paying off our debt. You can't do what you're looking to do with \$20 trillion in debt."

OCTOBER 4, 2016 VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Kaine mentioned climate change in a response to a question from debate moderator Elaine Quijano about presidential leadership:

"Kaine: I am so proud to be running with another strong, history-making woman, Hillary Clinton, to be president of the United States. I'm proud because her vision of stronger together, building an economy that works for all, not just those at the top, being safe in the world not only with a strong military, but also strong alliances to battle terrorism and climate change, and also to build a community of respect, just like Barbara Johns tried to do 65 years ago. That's why I'm so proud to be her running mate."

Kaine mentioned green jobs in response to question from debate moderator Elaine Quijano about the national debt:

"Kaine: Hillary and I have a plan that's on the table that's a 'you're hired' plan. Five components. First thing we do is we invest in manufacturing, infrastructure, and research in the clean energy jobs of tomorrow."

OCTOBER 9, 2016 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

An audience member asked candidates about how their energy policy would balance the nation's energy needs with environmental impacts and jobs:

"QUESTION: What steps will your energy policy take to meet our energy needs, while at the same time remaining environmentally friendly and minimizing job loss for fossil power plant workers?"

Clinton mentioned climate change and clean energy in response to an audience member's question about the candidate's energy policy:

"CLINTON: So I have a comprehensive energy policy, but it really does include fighting **climate change**, because I think that is a serious problem. And I support moving toward more clean, renewable energy as quickly as we can, because I think we can be the 21st century clean energy superpower and create millions of new jobs and businesses."

OCTOBER 19, 2016 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Clinton mentioned climate change in response to a question about the candidate's jobs plans:

"CLINTON: Well, I think when the middle class thrives, America thrives. And so my plan is based on growing the economy, giving middle-class families many more opportunities. I want us to have the biggest jobs program since World War II, jobs in infrastructure and advanced manufacturing. **I think we can compete with high-wage countries, and I believe we should. New jobs and clean energy, not only to fight climate change, which is a serious problem, but to create new opportunities and new businesses.**"

2020

SEPTEMBER 29, 2020 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

[Debate Transcript](#)

Biden mentioned extreme weather and the environment in response to remarks by Trump about the suburbs:

"BIDEN: They're dying in the suburbs. **His failure to deal with the environment. They're being flooded. They're being burned out, because he has refusal to do anything. That's why the suburbs are in trouble.**"

Debate moderator Chris Wallace mentioned climate change and the Paris Climate Accord in a question asking Trump what he believes about the science behind climate change and his plans to address the issue:

“CHRIS WALLACE: You know, I'd like to talk about **climate change**. Okay, the forest fires in the West, are raging now. They have burned millions of acres. They have displaced hundreds of thousands of people. When state officials there blame the fires on **climate change**, Mr. President, you said, 'I don't think the science knows.' **Over your four years, you have pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accord. You have rolled back a number of Obama environmental records. What do you believe about the science of climate change? And what will you do in the next four years to confront it?**”

Debate moderator Chris Wallace asked Trump a follow up question about his beliefs in the science of climate change:

“CHRIS WALLACE: **What do you, what do you believe about the science of climate change, sir?**”

Debate moderator Chris Wallace mentioned global warming in his second follow up question to Trump about his beliefs in the science of climate change:

“CHRIS WALLACE: **Do you believe that human pollution, gashouse, greenhouse gas emissions contributes to the global warming of this planet?**”

Debate moderator Chris Wallace mentioned climate change in a question to Trump about his decision to roll back the Clean Power Plan and fuel economy standards:

CHRIS WALLACE: **But sir, if you believe in the science of climate change, why have you rolled back the Obama Clean Power Plan, which limited carbon emissions in power plants? Why have you relaxed --**

TRUMP: Because it was driving energy prices through the sky --

CHRIS WALLACE: Why have you relaxed fuel economy standards that are going to create more pollution from cars?”

Debate moderator Chris Wallace mentioned green jobs and climate change in a question to Biden about his climate agenda:

“CHRIS WALLACE: **Vice President Biden I'd like you to respond to the President's climate change record, but I also want to ask you about a concern.** You proposed \$2 trillion in green jobs you talk about new limits, not

abolishing, but new limits on fracking. Ending the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity by 2035. And zero, net emission of greenhouse gases by 2050. The president says, a lot of these things would tank the economy and cost millions of jobs.”

Biden mentioned clean energy, green technology, green jobs and the Paris Climate Accord in response to a question from debate moderator Chris Wallace about his climate agenda:

“BIDEN: During our administration Recovery Act I was able to bring down the cost of renewable energy to cheaper than, or as cheap as coal, and gas, and oil. Nobody's going to build another coal fire plant in America. No one's going to build another oil fire in America. They're going to move to renewable energy, number one. Number two, we're going to make sure that we are able to take the federal fleet and turn it into a fleet that's run on their electric vehicles. Making sure that they can do that we're gonna put 500,000 charging stations in all of the highways that we're going to be building in the future. We're going to build an economy, that in fact, is going to provide for the ability, us to take 4 million buildings and make sure that they in fact are weatherized. In a way that, in fact, they'll, they'll emit significantly less gas and oil because the heat will not be going out. There's so many things we can do now to create thousands and thousands of jobs. We can get to net zero in terms of energy production by 2035. Not only not costing people jobs, creating jobs. Creating millions of jobs. Not 15 bucks an hour, but prevailing wage. By having a new infrastructure that in fact is green. And the first thing I will do, I will rejoin the Paris accord. I will join the Paris accord because with us out look what's happening. It's all falling apart. “

In a follow up question, debate moderator Chris Wallace asked Biden about the cost of his climate plan:

“WALLACE: What about the argument that President Trump basically says that you have to balance, environmental interests, and economic interests? And he's drawn a line [...] Let me -- Let me -- Wait a minute, sir. I actually have studied your plan, and it includes upgrading 4 million buildings, weatherizing 2 million homes over four years, building one and a half million energy efficient homes. So the question becomes, the president said, I think some people who support the president would say, 'That sounds like it's going to cost a lot of money and hurt the economy.'”

Biden mentioned green jobs and extreme weather in response to debate moderator Chris Wallace's question about the cost of his climate plan:

“BIDEN: What it's gonna do, it's gonna create thousands and millions of jobs. Good-paying jobs- [...] The fact it's going to create millions of good paying

jobs. And these tax incentives to people to weatherize, where he wants to get her get rid of, is going to make the economy much safer. **Look how much we're paying now to deal with the hurricanes, with a deal with-** By the way he has an answer for hurricanes. He said, 'Maybe we should drop a nuclear weapon on them, they may!'"

Biden mentioned global warming, green jobs, the Paris Climate Accord, and extreme weather in response to debate moderator Chris Wallace's question about the cost of his climate plan:

"BIDEN: And here's the deal, we are going to be in a position where we can create, hard, hard good jobs by making sure the environment is clean, and we all are in better shape. We spend billions of dollars now, billions of dollars, on floods, hurricanes rising seas. We're in real trouble. Look what's happened just in the Midwest with these storms that come through and wipe out entire sections and counties in Iowa. They didn't happen before. **There because of global warming. We make up 15% of the world's problem. We in fact- But the rest of the world we got to get them to come along. That's why we have to get back into, back into the Paris accord."**

Trump mentioned the Green New Deal in response to Biden's remarks about his climate agenda:

"TRUMP: Chris, so why didn't he do it for 47 years? You were vice president. Why didn't you get the world- China sends up real dirt into the air. Russia does. India does. They all do. We're supposed to be good. And by the way, he made a couple of statements, the Green New Deal is 100 trillion dollar plan –"

In a follow up question, debate moderator Chris Wallace asked Biden if he supported the Green New Deal:

"CHRIS WALLACE: But about the economy, and about this question of what it's going to cost. The Green New Deal and the idea of what, what your environmental changes to [...] Do you support the Green New Deal?"

Biden mentioned the Green New Deal in an exchange with debate moderator Chris Wallace about the proposal:

"BIDEN: The Green New Deal will pay for itself as we move forward. You're not going to build plants that in fact are great polluting plans. [...] No, I don't support the Green New Deal. [...] I support the Biden plan that I put forward. The Biden Plan, which is different than what he calls the radical Green New Deal."

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Pence mentioned the Green New Deal in response to a question from debate moderator Susan Page about COVID-19 protocols at the White House:

“PENCE: Joe Biden and Kamala Harris consistently talk about mandates, and not not just mandates with the coronavirus but a government takeover of health, the Green New Deal – all government control. We're about freedom and respecting the freedom of the American people.”

Harris mentioned clean energy and green technology in response to a question from debate moderator Susan Page about the campaign's economic proposals:

“HARRIS: Which is why he passed a tax bill benefitting the top 1% and the biggest corporations of America, leading to a \$2 trillion deficit that the American people are gonna have to pay for. On day one, Joe Biden will repeal that tax bill. He'll get rid of it. And what he'll do with the money is invested in the American people. And through a plan that is about investing in infrastructure, something that Donald Trump said he would do. I remember hearing about some infrastructure week. I don't think it ever happened. But Joe Biden will do that. He'll invest in infrastructure. It's about upgrading our roads and bridges, but also investing in clean energy and renewable energy. Joe is gonna invest that money in what we need to do around innovation. There was a time when our country believed in science and invested in research and development so that we were an innovation leader on the globe.”

Pence mentioned the Green New Deal in response to a question from debate moderator Susan Page about economic recovery:

“PENCE: Joe Biden and Kamala Harris want to raise taxes. They want to bury our economy under a \$2 trillion Green New Deal, which you were one of the original co-sponsors of in the United States Senate. They want to abolish fossil fuels and ban fracking, which would cost hundreds of thousands of American jobs all across the Heartland.”

Pence mentioned the Green New Deal in an exchange with Harris on the U.S. economy:

“PENCE: You yourself said on multiple occasions when you were running for president that you would ban fracking. Joe Biden looked his supporter in the eye and pointed and said ‘I guarantee, I guarantee that we will abolish fossil fuels.’ We have a \$2 trillion version of the Green New Deal, Susan, that your newspaper USA TODAY said really wasn't that very different from the original Green New Deal. More taxes, more regulation, banning fracking, abolishing fossil fuel, crushing American energy and economic surrender to China is a prescription for economic decline.”

Debate moderator Susan Page mentioned extreme weather and climate change in her question to Pence about his belief that man-made climate change is worsening climate disasters:

“SUSAN PAGE: Thank you very, very much, Vice President Pence. Once again you provided the perfect segue to a new topic, which is **climate change**. And Vice President Pence, I'd like to pose the first question to you. This year we've seen record-setting hurricanes in the south. Another one, Hurricane Delta is now threatening the gulf. And we have seen record-setting wildfires in the West. Do you believe, as the scientific community has concluded, that man-made **climate change** has made wildfires bigger, hotter and more deadly? And it made hurricanes wetter, slower and more damaging?”

Pence mentioned climate change and the Paris Climate Accord in response to a question from debate moderator Susan Page about his belief that man-made climate change is worsening climate disasters:

“PENCE: Now with regard to **climate change**, the climate is changing. But the issue is, what's the cause and what do we do about it. President Trump has made it clear that we're going to continue to listen to the science. Now Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, would put us back in the Paris Climate Accord. [...] You know what's remarkable is the United States has reduced CO2 more than the countries that are still in the Paris Climate Accord, but we've done it through innovation.”

Debate moderator Susan Page asked Harris where a Biden-Harris Administration would stand on the Green New Deal:

“SUSAN PAGE: Senator Harris, as the Vice President mentioned, you co-sponsored the Green New Deal in Congress, but Vice President Biden said in last week's debate that he does not support the Green New Deal. But if you

look at the Biden Harris campaign website it describes the Green New Deal as a crucial framework. **What exactly would be the stance of a Biden Harris Administration toward the Green New Deal?**"

Harris mentioned climate change, extreme weather, clean energy, green jobs and the Paris Climate Accord in response to a question from Debate moderator Susan page on the Green New Deal:

"HARRIS: Joe Biden's economic plan Moody's, which is a reputable Wall Street firm, has said will create 7 million more jobs than Donald Trump's. **And part of those jobs, that will be created by Joe Biden, are going to be about clean energy and renewable energy. Because you see, Joe understands that the West Coast of our country is burning, including my home state of California. Joe sees what is happening on the Gulf states, which are being battered by storms. Joe has seen and talked with the farmers in Iowa, whose entire crops have been destroyed because of floods.** And so Joe believes, again, in science. I'll tell you something, Susan, I served, when I first got to the Senate, on the committee that's responsible for the environment. Do you know this administration took the word science off the website? And then took the phrase **climate change** off the website? This-- We have seen a pattern with this administration which is they don't believe in science. **And Joe's plan is about saying we're going to deal with it, but we're also going to create jobs.** Donald Trump, when asked about the wildfires in California and the question was, you know, the science is telling us this ,you know what Donald Trump said? Science doesn't know. **So, let's talk about who is prepared to lead our country over the course of the next four years on what is an existential threat to us as human beings. Joe is about saying we're going to invest that in renewable energy, we're going to be about the creation of millions of jobs, we will achieve net zero emissions by 2050, carbon neutral by 2035-- Joe has a plan.** This has been a lot of talk from the Trump administration, and really it has been to go backward instead of forward. **We will also reenter the climate agreement with pride."**

Debate moderator Susan Page asked Pence if he believed that climate change poses an existential threat:

"SUSAN PAGE: Senator Harris just said that **climate change** is an existential threat. **Vice President Pence, do you believe that climate change poses an existential threat?**"

Pence mentioned the Green New Deal and the Paris Climate Accord in response to a question from debate moderator Susan Page about his belief that climate change poses an existential threat:

“PENCE: As I said, Susan, the climate is changing. We’ll follow the science. [...] You were the first senate co-sponsor of the Green New Deal. And while Joe Biden denied the Green New Deal, Susan, thank you for pointing out, the Green New Deal is on their campaign website. And as USA TODAY said, it’s essentially the same plan as you co-sponsored with AOC when she submitted it in the Senate. And you just heard the senator say that she’s going to resubmit America to the Paris Climate Accord. Look, the American people have always cherished our environment. We will continue to cherish it. We’ve made great progress reducing CO2 emissions through American innovation and the development of natural gas and fracking. We don’t need a massive, \$2 trillion Green New Deal that would oppose all new mandates American businesses and American families, Joe Biden wants to retrofit 4 million American business buildings. It makes no sense. It will cost jobs. President Trump he’s gonna put America first. He’s going to put jobs first and take care of our environment and follow the science.”

Pence mentioned the Green New Deal and the Paris Climate Accord in response to Harris’ remarks about job losses and the trade war with China:

“PENCE: And that’s exactly the kind of growth we’re going to continue to see as we bring our nation through this pandemic. Your Green New Deal, your massive new mandates, your Paris Climate Accord, it’s gonna kill jobs this time just like it killed jobs in the last administration.”

Pence mentioned climate change in remarks about Harris’ record on trade deals in response to a question about the U.S.’s relationship with China:

“PENCE: President Trump fought to renegotiate NAFTA, and the United States, Mexico, Canada agreement is now the law of the land. American people deserve to know Senator Kamala Harris was one of only 10 members of the Senate to vote against the USMCA. It was a huge win for American auto workers. It was a huge win for American farmers, especially dairy in the upper Midwest. But, Senator, you said it didn’t go far enough on climate change, that you put your, your radical environmental agenda ahead of American auto workers and ahead of American jobs. I think the American people deserve to know that.”

