

**Testimony of Dr. Frank I. Luntz**  
**Senate Democrats' Special Committee on the Climate Crisis**  
**July 25, 2019**

I begin by thanking you for your leadership on this issue, but acknowledging that I am here under somewhat false pretenses.

Senator, your staff reached out to me because of a poll conducted by Luntz Global for the Climate Leadership Council in May of this year. It pronounced in bold headlines that Republicans supported a tax on carbon as a way to fight climate change.

The media lapped it up. From Time Magazine to the Atlantic to the Financial Times and even Bloomberg, the world was told that “*influential GOP pollster*” Frank Luntz was calling for a tax on carbon – and the GOP was warned that electoral disaster would ensue if they didn’t listen. Social media ate it up ... Twitter forwarded it to everyone ... and I got the best publicity I’ve had in years.

The only problem is ... that wasn’t me. I didn’t take that poll. I left that firm 18 months ago – but no one bothered to check the facts – other than the New York Times. Twitter was wrong, as it so often is. Social media was wrong. The mainstream media was wrong.

And so here I am, sitting before you – grateful for the chance to correct the record.

So what does America really believe?

First, America believes climate change is real, that it is man-made, and that both political and business leaders need to do more, right now, to address it.

Second, climate change matters more to Democrats and less to Republicans, but younger Republicans do care about it – a lot – and want something done in a bipartisan effort ... now.

Third, an increasing number of Americans are willing to pay, or pay more, but only if that action has, and I quote, a “*meaningful, measurable impact*” on climate change. Support for a carbon tax is significant, but it melts away if it is shown to have little or no impact on climate change.

And fourth, they expect the rest of the world to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. And that begins with China. Earlier this week, Forbes announced that, for the first time, there are more Chinese companies on the Forbes Global 500 list than American countries. Americans do NOT want to put their country at an economic disadvantage if China doesn’t participate as well.

So where does that leave us?

As someone who polls and presents to both Republican and Democratic leaders, I know – we all know – that climate change has become a partisan issue. And for us to make that

meaningful, measurable difference, we have to come up with meaningful, measurable, non-partisan solutions.

We also need to jettison much of the most extreme language in favor of a get-it-done approach. A cottage industry has arisen around this topic that is more interested in the politics than the policies, and there are special interests on both sides that are using the issue cynically to raise millions of dollars to pay for their salaries and expenses while nothing gets done.

Senator, I agreed to come here because I see you as a genuine advocate for a genuine approach to a genuine problem. I want to help. I want to do the right thing. I want clean air, safe water, and an environment that is healthier tomorrow than today.

That's why I beg you and your colleagues to use the language that motivates the American people to action.

For example, sustainability is the buzzword of environmentalists, but sustainability communicates the status quo. What Americans really want, and I quote, is a "*cleaner, safer, healthier world.*"

Another example is the focus on the *consequences of inaction*, when what the American people really want to know are the benefits to our health, our safety and our economy if we take action now. Frightening people is easy, but it paralyzes them. Telling them how they will personally benefit is a much more effective call to action.

I end my opening remarks with my own personal interaction with our increasingly extreme and volatile weather. I was awoken at 3:38 am by an alarm on my phone that I had never heard before and have never heard since. It was an alert that a massive fire was headed in the direction of my home in Los Angeles. I opened the curtains to my bedroom – and there it was, less than a mile away. Flames lighting the nighttime sky.

The courageous firefighters of Los Angeles saved my home, but others aren't so lucky. Rising sea levels, melting ice caps, tornadoes and hurricanes more ferocious than ever.

It's happening.

I'll gladly answer your questions today and help you message your Climate Change efforts tomorrow. But in return, you have to commit to putting policies ahead of politics, and solutions over sound-bites. We've had irreconcilable differences in the past, but **both** parties have proven that they can – and will – put aside fundamental differences when the survival of the country is at stake.

I thank you for this honor.