



The Right Thing To Do: Conservatives for Climate Action

June 25, 2019

Senator Brian Schatz, Chair
Opening statement (as prepared)

Good morning and I'd like to call the committee to order.

I'd like to welcome you all to today's hearing, which is focused on the growing momentum for climate action on the other side of the aisle.

This is the committee's second hearing. We started by hearing from mayors from across the country, who told us that, in their experiences as executives, climate action is feasible, practical, and financially wise. Last week, we had the first of many meetings with labor leaders, who we look forward to working with to develop climate solutions. And today, we are building the case that climate action is doable and it is not the exclusive domain of progressives.

It's obvious from the letter behind the name of everyone on this committee, but Democrats don't have a dance partner when it comes to climate action in the Senate. Our Republican colleagues have chosen not to be here. And the national Republican party as a whole is the only major political party on the planet that doesn't have a plan for climate change – that actually makes fun of climate action. I make this point not as a jab, but to point out that there is a space to be conservative and do something about climate change. Historically, conservatives in the United States have wanted to preserve institutions, and preserve the status quo. So under that definition, there is nothing conservative about allowing the climate to drastically change. There is nothing conservative about standing by while the planet becomes less inhabitable for humans, with more droughts, wildfires, and refugees.

There is nothing conservative about allowing this level of disruption, or this amount of ecosystem collapse. Especially not when you look at the cost of this problem to the taxpayer.

And I'm not alone here. When you look at the polling that's been done, it's clear that Republicans outside of the Congress support climate action. A poll that came out earlier this year declared that we have "reached a tipping point" when it comes to climate action. It found that a strong majority of Americans are more concerned about climate change today than they were only a year ago. That majority includes 58 percent of Republican voters under 40, and the

report noted that this particular demographic of Republicans are angry that their party has no plan, and no leadership, when it comes to climate change. And to that Senate Democrats say, join the club.

That's why we're here today. Because everyone in this room – Republican or Democrat, progressive or conservative, and everything in between – can agree that climate change is a crisis, and we are experiencing it now. Not in the distant future, not in the near future. It is happening now. The cost of action is much lower than inaction, and the benefits of action are just as great as the losses that will come from inaction. And by that I mean that climate action is not a punitive measure. It's an opportunity for us to re-invest in our infrastructure. To pursue an energy revolution. To protect our farmers, and the future of our children. And to strengthen the middle class.

But outside this room, not everyone agrees with us. We have room for improvement when it comes to creating opportunities for bipartisan climate solutions.

So this committee is interested in our witnesses' insights into how we can better communicate with conservative stakeholders, whether it's young Republicans or religious communities. I'd like to welcome:

1. Dr. Frank Luntz, the founder and CEO of FIL, Inc.
2. Kiera O'Brien, a student at Harvard University and the Vice President of Students for Carbon Dividends
3. and Nick Huey, the founder of the Climate Campaign.

Thank you for taking the time to be here, and sharing your testimony with us. We are looking forward to hearing your experiences, and, most importantly, your views on how we can make climate action a bipartisan effort. We'll begin by hearing testimony from each of the witnesses going down the line, starting with Dr. Luntz.