

Environment:

Addressing Climate Change While Strengthening our Economy

August 2026



Top Line

- 1. Climate change is real and serious risk, and most Americans agree with that.**
- 2. Texas is at serious risk from climate change, and we are already seeing the effects.**
- 3. However, under Republican leadership we are not taking the actions needed to address the risks.**
- 4. Action on climate change includes steps to reduce the pace of change (mitigation) and to prepare for the negative aspects of climate change that are already occurring (adaptation). It will also benefit our economy.**

Backup

- 1. Climate change is real and serious risk, and most Americans agree with that.**
 - a. The scientific consensus is overwhelming**
 - An analysis of thousands of scientific papers by researchers at Cornell University found that over 99% of "peer-reviewed scientific papers agree that climate change is mainly caused by humans." (1)
 - NASA provides a summary of statements by multiple scientific organizations that have concluded that climate change is real and is caused by human activities, including (2):
 - The American Association for the Advancement of Science

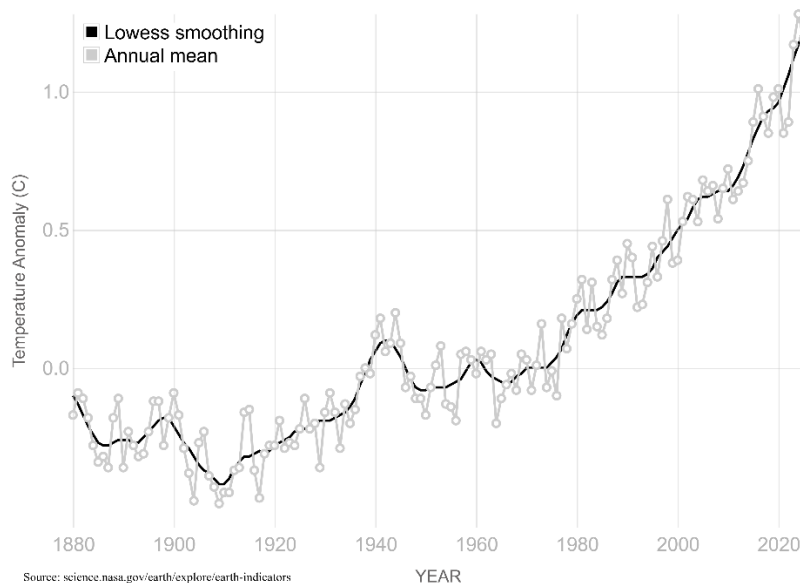
- The American Chemical Society
- The American Geophysical Union
- The American Medical Association
- The American Meteorological Society
- The US National Academies of Sciences states "Improved observations confirm unequivocally that greenhouse gas emissions are warming Earth's surface and changing Earth's climate." (3)

b. Climate change is now directly observable - Scientists have known for over a century that increasing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will increase global temperatures, but now the effects of climate change are easily observable. (4)

- NASA shows that CO2 levels have been steadily increasing - from about 320 parts per million in 1960 to over 420 ppm today. (5)
- NASA charts global temperatures over time, showing an increase of 1.19 degree centigrade (2.14 degrees Fahrenheit) over the average from 1951 to 1980, and that the increase is accelerating. (6)

Annual Temperatures

Source: NASA, <https://science.nasa.gov/earth/explore/earth-indicators/global-temperature/>



c. Most Texans understand the problem. 80.9% of Texans believe climate change is happening, and of those, 71.4% believe it is mostly caused by human activity. (7)

2. Texas is at serious risk from climate change, and we are already seeing the effects

a. Climate change is already showing up in Texas in multiple ways:

- i. **Higher average temperatures** - Temperatures in Texas have risen almost 1.5°F since the early 20th century. (8)
- ii. **More days over 100 degrees** - Since the 1970s, the average number of days with temperatures over 100 have more than doubled. (9)
- iii. **More Flooding** - These hotter temperatures cause extreme downpours, as hot air holds more water. We are seeing more frequent and severe flooding, including Hurricane Harvey in 2017 and the tragic floods in the Texas Hill Country in July of 2025. (10)
- iv. **Sea Level Rise** - According to NASA, global average sea level has risen 8–9 inches since 1880. The increase is accelerating, and by 2100 could be 2 feet or more. (11)
 - This puts coastal areas at risk, including coastal barrier islands and wetlands. These are essential buffers, absorbing storm surge and protecting inland communities from hurricanes and flooding.
 - As those buffers disappear, cities and towns along the Gulf Coast — including key infrastructure such as the Galveston Ship Channel and Freeport industrial center — are dangerously exposed. (12)
- v. **Wildfires** - the Texas State Climatologist points out that increasing temperatures and drier conditions increase the likelihood and severity of wildfires. "Climate change is increasing the number of days susceptible to wildfire. The increase has been most dramatic in western Texas." (13) Just since 2022 over 2,000,000 million acres in Texas have been affected by wildfires. (30)
- vi. **Climate disasters are increasing** - All of this is showing up in more "billion dollar disasters". Back in the 1980's and 90's, we typically had one or two a year. But now it is common to have five or more major disasters every year. If it feels like we are experiencing more "500 year floods" or massive wildfires or extended droughts, it's not your imagination. (14)
- vii. **Heat-related ER visits are increasing.** A study reported in the Annals of Emergency Medicine in 2025 found a significant increase in Heat Related Illnesses in North and Central Texas between 2015 and 2023. (15)

- b. Texas is more at risk than other states** - According to Public Citizen, Texas is the state most vulnerable to climate change. It makes sense – because of our geographic location we are at risk for hurricanes, flooding, heat waves, droughts and wildfires, all of which are made more dangerous because of climate change.
- c. The effects are projected to get worse over time** - The scientific consensus is that burning fossil fuels is warming the planet, with higher temperatures being felt across Texas. Scientists say additional heating will increase the frequency of weather disasters and worsen droughts in Texas, harming food production, public health and other industries. (16)

3. However, under Republican leadership we are not taking the actions needed to address the risks.

- a. President Trump has called climate change a "hoax" and has reversed action on climate change.**
- b. The 2026 Texas Republican Party Platform clearly opposes action on climate change.**
 - The 2026 Republican Party Platform of Texas specifically states that "we oppose environmentalism, or "climate change" initiatives, that obstruct legitimate business interests and private property use..." (17)
 - Their platform also states that Texas Republicans want to reclassify carbon dioxide as a non-pollutant, abolish the Environmental Protection Agency, and repeal the Endangered Species Act. (17)
- c. In contrast, the Texas Democratic Party platform calls for action to address climate change (18):**
 - Developing a statewide climate action plan that will achieve emission reductions in Texas.
 - Leveraging innovation in clean energy to secure the cleanliness of our air and water, through investment in transmission infrastructure, job training, innovation, & equitable access to clean energy for America, both nationally and in Texas;
 - Fully fund the "Texas Emissions Reduction Plan Fund" administered by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to offer incentives for clean vehicles and infrastructure, including electric vehicles and storage;

Bottom line, Climate Change is an urgent risk for the US and Texas, and Republican leadership is not doing nearly enough.

4. Effective policies can help the US and Texas reduce the risks of climate change, while strengthening our economy.

a. Climate action falls into two broad categories:

- **Mitigation**, which is action to reduce the amount of climate change, and
- **Adaptation**, action to adapt to the climate change we are already experiencing and bound to experience even more severely in the future.

While much of this action will need to be driven from a national level, there is a lot we can do in Texas.

b. Mitigation – The US and Texas should take action to reduce climate change:

i. Support and invest in clean energy - We can reduce our dependence on coal, oil, and natural gas by setting clear targets for phasing out fossil fuel generation and expanding renewable energy infrastructure.

- While Texas is already a leader in wind and solar energy production, further expansion, supported by battery storage and grid modernization, would significantly cut emissions and enhance grid reliability.
- And wind and solar are now cheaper than fossil fuels in many cases. An analysis reported in Scientific American finds "Renewable energy doesn't need subsidies to compete with fossil fuels when it comes to building new power plants." (19)
- The investment firm Lazard conducts detailed analysis of energy costs by fuel source. The key metric is "Levelized Cost of Energy" (LCOE), which measures the total average cost to build and run a power plant over its entire life, divided by the total electricity it is expected to make.
 - Lazard states that "On a \$/MWh (megawatt hour) basis, unsubsidized renewable energy remains the most cost-competitive form of new-build generation". (20)
 - This is even before the societal cost of CO2 emissions are considered.
 - And Lazard points out that renewable sources are less vulnerable to changes in fuel prices such as oil and natural gas (20), which can fluctuate and are influenced by decisions made in other countries.

ii. Support and invest in electrification of transportation, including the electric vehicle charging network. This will encourage more of our transportation to convert to electricity instead of fossil fuels, which produces much less

greenhouse gases. The Union of Concerned Scientists points out that EV's reduce global warming emissions, and that while all drivers save money on fuel, rural EV drivers save the most. (21)

iii. **Support improvements in building efficiency**, both residential and commercial, which are responsible for almost 40% of U.S. Carbon Dioxide Emissions. The Environmental and Energy Study Group points out "The building sector could play a dramatic role in stabilizing atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide (CO2), and the next generation of buildings could provide a wealth of collateral benefits such as improved affordability, health, safety, and resale value." (22)

iv. **Reduce Methane Emissions.** Methane is a very powerful greenhouse gas, and is the primary component of natural gas.

- ProPublica explains the issue with methane emissions: "Gas escapes as wells are drilled and before infrastructure is in place to capture it. It also can be intentionally released if pressure in the system poses a safety risk or if capturing and transporting it to be sold is not profitable. Typically, drillers burn the gas they don't capture, converting the methane to carbon dioxide, a less potent greenhouse gas, in a process called flaring. Sometimes, they release the gas without burning it, in a process called venting." (23) Both of these processes, flaring and venting, put harmful emissions into the atmosphere.
- The President of the Texas Oil and Gas Association has stated, "The Texas oil and natural gas industry is committed to ongoing progress in reducing flaring and methane emissions while continuing to meet the ever-growing demand for reliable oil and natural gas across the globe." (23)
- The Texas Legislature should work with the oil and gas industry and the trade association to ensure that methane emissions are minimized.

c. **Adaptation – because climate change is already affecting the US and Texas, we should take action now to adapt and prepare.**

Vulnerabilities to climate change include the impacts of more severe droughts, sea level rise, more intense coastal flooding and increased intensity of storms — particularly stronger hurricanes, longer-lasting heat waves and extreme rainstorms.

We can prepare for these events and reduce their negative effects by planning now and strengthening our infrastructure to better withstand future climate stresses.

- i. **Develop a state level climate adaptation plan for Texas.** Unlike many other states, Texas does not currently have a statewide adaptation plan. (24)
 - A state-level climate adaptation plan outlines how a state government will prepare for and minimize risks from climate change impacts like extreme heat, flooding, and drought.
 - It typically includes risk assessments, sector-specific resilience goals for water and infrastructure, and implementation strategies for local communities. (25)
- ii. **Secure Texas' long-range water future,** to ensure we are prepared for the expected increases in drought frequency and severity. See our paper on “Securing Texas’ Water Future” [here](#).
- iii. **Strengthen our electric grid,** including the ability to handle extreme heat as well as extreme cold. Our paper on strengthening the grid is [here](#).
- iv. **Build for flood and coastal risk.** Protect wetlands and coastal marshes, screen future state-funded transportation projects for climate risks, and update flood maps for current and future rainfall projections, not solely historical conditions.

d. Addressing climate change will strengthen our economy.

Opponents of climate change often claim that action will hurt our economy. But in fact, action on climate change will benefit our economy in many ways:

- i. **Reduce damage and natural disasters.** Slowing climate change will limit future losses from extreme heat, floods, drought, wildfire, infrastructure damage, disrupted supply chains, and lost agricultural output. (26)
- ii. **More jobs.** As of 2024, over 260,000 Texans worked in clean energy jobs (27), and jobs in the clean energy sector are growing much faster than the overall market. (28)

- iii. **Lower energy costs and less volatility.** Energy efficiency, building upgrades, electrification, and renewable power reduce fuel consumption and dependence on volatile fossil-fuel prices. Renewable energy costs have decreased rapidly, and renewable energy is now the least costly fuel source for new electricity generation capacity. (20)
- iv. **Health Savings.** Cutting fossil-fuel combustion also cuts fine-particle pollution, nitrogen oxides, and other harmful pollutants. The World Health Organization estimates that globally, meeting the Paris Agreement goals for CO2 reduction could save roughly 1 million lives annually by 2050 through reduced air pollution (29)

Climate change is already affecting Texas, and the damage will only get worse. We can take effective action to mitigate climate change and adapt to the changes that are already occurring, and this will benefit our economy.

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