

The New Political Climate

<https://www.climateone.org/audio/new-political-climate>

Recorded on April 29, 2017



[01:03:14] Greg Dalton: From the Newseum in Washington DC this is Climate One, changing the conversation about America's energy, economy and environment. I'm Greg Dalton. Record percentages of Americans are deeply concerned about global warming, according to a recent Gallup poll. More than 60% say it is caused by humans and is happening now. That concern was on display recently when tens of thousands of people marched on the National Mall calling for strong climate protection. President Trump has called global warming a hoax and filled his cabinet with people who deny or doubt the overwhelming scientific consensus that burning fossil fuels is causing temperatures and seas to rise. Most Republicans in Congress try to stay as far away as possible from this issue. Many Democrats as well as corporations, including IBM, Coca-Cola, Disney, General Electric and Walmart say climate is a serious risk to the economy and addressing it will create jobs and wealth.

On the show today we'll explore the politics of carbon pollution in Washington DC and around the country. Later in the show we'll hear from U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, a Democrat from Rhode Island who's one of the strongest voices in Congress calling for a move to cleaner energy. First we'll hear from two activists from the right and the left. What they say may surprise you. May Boeve is Executive Director of 350.org, a grassroots organization that mobilizes people around the country in the world for getting off fossil fuels. She's a former student of 350.org founder author and activist Bill McKibben. Debbie Dooley is President of Conservatives for Energy Freedom. A resident of Atlanta she formally served on the board of the Tea Party Patriots and is a cofounder of the Green Tea Coalition. Please welcome them to Climate One. (01:05:00)

[Applause]

Welcome to you both. Debbie Dooley, what's your vision for America in an era of global warming?

[01:05:09] Debbie Dooley: In vision that we remade the regulatory barriers that exist and allow energy to compete on a level playing field in the market. I fully and truly believe that moving to a decentralize power structure. For example, rooftop solar is in our national security interest. So, you know, I envision tens of millions of rooftop solar installations on homes. I envision sooner or later Republicans coming to grips with the fact that fossil fuel is damaging our environment. I don't see how they cannot believe that fossil fuel is causing damage to the environment. I see a world where left and right come together and we work together for a green energy revelation that is enveloping our nation as we speak. 75% of Trump supporters like renewables and I think we should do more to advance renewables. We need to look forward to innovation to technology to clean energy and job creation.

[01:06:28] Greg Dalton: Well if 75% of Trump supporters support renewables, he's going in a different direction trying to drill off the coast, bring back coal. So is that upsetting to Trump supporters or is it just not a high priority issue for them?

[01:06:41] Debbie Dooley: It's not a high priority issue for most Trump supporters. And you have to understand a lot of Republicans and conservatives don't like excessive regulation. They believe in competition and in choice and that's something they believe in. They don't believe trying to regulate an industry out of business but more and more people are embracing renewables. (01:07:05)

This is quite a change from the end of 2012, the beginning of 2013 when I first became a very strong clean energy advocate. People looked at me like I was from Mars. You're a conservative, you can't like clean energy but I did. And I do think one of the things, I spoke at Bloomberg's event and I said, made a statement on the record that I did not believe President Trump was going to pull out of the Paris Accord because it would be bad for business. And I mean the genie is out of the bottle, it's not gonna be put back in. I mean clean energy will continue to flourish even conservatives are embracing it. And that was a poll that was taken in November that showed only 25% of Trump supporters believed in climate change but 75% thought the nation should do more to advance renewables.

[01:08:05] Greg Dalton: And we'll get into some of that language later. May Boeve, how does that compare with your vision for a very different place politically but how does what you just heard compare with your vision for energy in America in a hot world?

[01:08:17] May Boeve: It does seemed pretty clear that the belief that renewable energy is what we

need, not only in this country but around the world is shared. More and more every day we're hearing this that that consensus is getting stronger and there's just so much evidence that people are saying their own economic development tied to the transition off of fossil fuels. So I think that is where we have room to build. And I think that believe is uniting people across political divides, across all the divides we see in our movement. So, in that sense I think there's a lot to work from. A lot of our work is focused on how quickly can we accelerate the transition off of fossil fuels because what we know about climate change is that it's already happening much faster than anyone expected. (01:09:00)

Our top scientists are horrified when they look at their own models they look at the evidence and they see what's taking place. So our concern is that that fossil fuel interests are standing in the way of that progress and it's their impact on the political process that we're contending with. So that is why we see people mobilizing in the streets. Today is historic People's Climate March. The Science March last weekend, there are countless publications of people who are trying to move this forward that's I think where the challenge comes is that we do see a very strong role for government in bringing that transition about. Because the scale of change required is so massive that it's hard to imagine doing that without the role of government.

And second one of the things that we really believe in is that this is a movement for everybody. It's got to be a deeply inclusive movement across the line so that historically divided us on race, on gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity, all the things that make us who we are we're all part of that movement. And so that's the other place where I think we need to be building something together. And if we can do that, and we can do that through renewable energy, sign me up.

[01:10:11] Greg Dalton: Debbie Dooley, you nodded your head when May Boeve said inclusive.

[01:10:14] Debbie Dooley: Yeah.

[01:10:15] Greg Dalton: The brown economy left a lot of people behind it affected communities of color who live closest to the refineries and factories. They breathe the dirtiest air. Do you think the green economy should address some of those people who were hurt in the brown economy?

[01:10:28] Debbie Dooley: I do. What I would love to see happen is for a lot of the renewable companies to build factories or plants in West Virginia and Kentucky and put coal miners that are out of work put them to work in the renewable energy field. And this is a field that is growing and it's growing stronger. But yes, I think renewable should be open to everyone. And I do know there are some programs in Kentucky and West Virginia where they're actually the solar industries actually training out of work coal miners in the solar industry field and I think that's something that needs to happen. (01:11:10)

[01:11:11] Greg Dalton: If this makes so much sense and there is jobs then what -- it sounds like there's more action at the state level than the federal level. Then, why is there this gridlock in Congress where there is by one recent count 180 members of Congress who deny climate change, 142 in the house, 38 in the Senate. They've accepted \$82 million from fossil fuel companies, is that related?

[01:11:36] Debbie Dooley: I think that's very related. And I can tell you from my work in the states under the Obama administration. Even though he was very pro renewables, I was fighting battle after battle after battle on the state level. And a lot of that money what I saw happening is something that's a very dangerous trend as far as I am concerned in renewables. Is that you saw these fossil fuel companies joining forces with these electric utility monopolies to stop competition from renewables. You have to understand one thing, people say, well, why would these electric utilities do that. They make a guaranteed profit every time they have to build a new power plant. So they want to keep on having to build new power plant in Florida. I mean Koch brothers funded groups, they're horrible. I don't like, you know, I'm not fond of Koch brothers or their groups in any way because I've had experience with them actually lying outright, lying and distorting the facts. And some of the very same people that or these groups like Heartland and Competitive Enterprise Institute that are saying man is not damaging the environment, renewables are bad. In the 1990s, the same groups were taking money from big tobacco to convince Americans secondhand smoke pose no health risk. If they lied to us once, why should we believe anything they say? (01:13:13)

[Applause]

[01:13:19] Greg Dalton: May Boeve, are you having a little bit of an out of body experience hearing --

[Laughter]

-- a cofounder of the Tea Party talking like this? I'd like to, you know, have your response.

[01:13:29] May Boeve: I'm really glad to hear you say this because I think one of the biggest challenges we face is the fossil fuel sector's political power. And, you know, for our own organization we are fighting a battle with Exxon right now. They have been lying about climate change for so long and new researches revealed that their own scientists actually knew about climate change many, many years ago and then they continue to fund organizations that pretended that climate change science was unresolved. And so attorneys general from Massachusetts, New York some other states have started to investigate what did Exxon know when did they know it. And we joined forces to try to amplify that campaign and we were thanked by receiving a subpoena from Exxon. So this battle is very serious and it's often portrayed on partisan lines, but there is enormous public support for holding the fossil fuel industry to account.

[01:14:29] Greg Dalton: And what's the best way to do that to hold them to account do you think?

[01:14:33] May Boeve: In many ways it's passed these kinds of policies ideally at the federal level but we don't see we have a lot of possibility for that right now. But the state and local level really demonstrating that the alternative is here. It's also to stopping pipelines and coal plants. Stopping the Keystone XL, the Dakota Access Pipeline, we need to demonstrate to this industry that people are moving forward. We don't want their product anymore. People are divesting institutions. Harvard just moved a lot of its assets out of fossil fuels this week. So that is how we show that this is different, this is a different time. (01:15:03)

[01:15:04] Greg Dalton: Debbie Dooley, you think divestment's a good idea? Taking your money and working.

[01:15:07] Debbie Dooley: I tell you, and one of the things you have to look at is when you mentioned gas pipelines. There was a pipeline that a company wanted to go put through South Georgia. Well, the farmers in South Georgia got together Republicans and they turned to Republicans in the Georgia legislature and they made it a private property right and stop that pipeline. And there was legislation that actually passed the Georgia legislature that made it more difficult for them. I think one of the things you have to look at and be careful is when you go after industry with Republicans, a lot of times they will become more sympathetic for that industry. I think the law say is very good and I will point to the big tobacco law say in the 1990s, had it not been for all these attorneys generals of these different states, you know, suing big tobacco, you know, we would have never, they would have kept denying it for decades. They would still be denying that smoke posed a health risk.

So I think what they're doing is very good and one of the things that we definitely need to do is just like I'm from the South. And one of the things that my mom used to say, said that, "Be careful when you go in the kitchen because when you turn the light on, the roaches scatter." So, a lot of times I think you have to shun the light and start calling them out. Hey, you're receiving money from this old company from fossil fuel or from Koch brothers or from these monopolies so of course you're doing that, you're being paid to take that position and shunning the light of day just like they're doing with the Law of Say.

[01:17:00] Greg Dalton: I'm Greg Dalton and this is Climate One, our project to the Commonwealth Club of California. We'll be back in a moment with May Boeve and Debbie Dooley.

And I'm gonna go now talk with U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse. Senator, thank you for joining us.

[01:17:11] Sheldon Whitehouse: Thanks, Greg.

[01:17:12] Greg Dalton: Thank you for being here.

[01:17:13] Sheldon Whitehouse: It's good to be with you. I don't dare move from my mark so you got to reach for me.

[01:17:19] Greg Dalton: We just heard from a cofounder of the Tea Party and 350.org. One of the most organized environmental organizations. Were you little surprised by what you just heard far left and far right talking?

[01:17:30] Sheldon Whitehouse: Well, you know, it goes all the way back to the Sierra Club and the Tea Party in Atlanta successfully beating back the big utilities who were trying to get taxes to their benefit for solar on the roofs of homes. And the Sierra Club folks were against that because it was not in the interests of a clean environment. And the Tea Party people are against that because they didn't want to have stuff on their homes taxed and they made the original Green Tea Coalition. There was nothing that should prevent 350.org and the Tea Party from getting together because there is nothing in Tea Party doctrine that says we're really happy when a big industry can take over our United States government and run it for its own benefit, paying no attention to the wishes of the welfare of the people. That's not in anybody's interest except the industry in question.

[01:18:20] Greg Dalton: So we see the left and the right getting together in Georgia and other places. How about at your workplace is that happening in the U.S. Senate because 10 years ago, Barack Obama and John McCain were basically in the same place on climate change when they both ran for president. Now things are further apart.

[01:18:38] Sheldon Whitehouse: I got elected in 2006. I was sworn in in 2007 for all of 2007, 2008 and 2009 while I was in the Senate there were multiple bipartisan climate change bills to regulate the emissions of carbon dioxide. And in that period the Republican candidate for president, you mentioned John McCain ran, carried his party's banner into that presidential election on a great climate change platform. (01:19:05)

Then came January of 2010. And in January of 2010, five justices on the Supreme Court gave the fossil fuel industry and other big industries the biggest prize that it's ever been given out in American politics, which is the ability to spend unlimited amounts of money in politics. You mentioned the 80 some million dollars that has gone to members of Congress, that is the tiniest tip of the iceberg. The big thing in Congress is the ability to spend unlimited money and with that comes the ability to threaten to spend unlimited money. So what the fossil fuel industry has done is going to the Republican Party, they've picked their target and they said, "anybody who crosses us on climate change, we will take you out." And they have a credible threat as demonstrated by a Republican Congressman named Bob Inglis who they in fact took out. So when you've got an industry saying we

have the ability to spend unlimited amount of money to crush you and we will do so if you dare cross us, that's much worse than \$80 million in reported money that's floating around. That's not good but that's not as bad as the threats.

[01:20:17] Greg Dalton: Lot of town halls recently Republicans have been challenged on climate change publicly in a way that they haven't been recently. Do you think that will cause some movement, Darrell Issa is a very conservative member of Congress from San Diego. He recently joined the caucus in Congress the Climate Solutions Caucus he won a very competitive race. Do you think that that's public pressure in these town halls is moving any of the members?

[01:20:40] Sheldon Whitehouse: Public pressure is moving them but so is the pressure of facts around them. Representative Curbelo represents the keys down in Florida. He's a Republican. If you live in the key town of Florida you are having a harder and harder time finding fresh water. As the sea encroaches, it pushes counter pressure against the underlying freshwater and it makes it hard to find. (01:21:00)

If you live in the keys you're looking at foreseeable circumstances, not too far from now when your house is going to be underwater. You have the Republican Mayor of that county planning for these near catastrophic eventualities. So if you're gonna represent that district you can't pretend this is not real everybody knows you're lying. So that pressure is also working on some members of Congress who are Republican, but it's easy to talk a cheap talk and sign on to a resolution that says I'm a Republican and I think we should do something. None of them yet have crossed the Rubicon to say here is the bill I'll actually support that is meaningful in addressing climate change.

[01:21:41] Greg Dalton: Senator Sanders and another senator recently introduced a bill for a hundred percent renewable power in America that's really regulated at the state level. We just heard from Debbie Dooley, Green Tea Party saying that she sees that moving forward. Is that something that there was no Republican cosponsors that bill, any chances that going anywhere?

[01:21:58] Sheldon Whitehouse: I doubt it. If you look at the Republicans outside of Congress who aren't under the same political pressure from the fossil fuel industry because they don't have an election upcoming in which unlimited money can be spent against them. Virtually every Republican who has looked at climate change and thought it through to a solution has come to the same solution. That solution is a price on carbon that makes the market work and that is revenue neutral, meaning you don't grow government with it, you take all the revenues that arises and you push it back to the public. And I think on the Democratic side, our answer to that is yes, we will be happily go there. But I think the best place to target a solution is where virtually every Republican points right now.

[01:22:43] Greg Dalton: Right and British Columbia has done that. Two former Republican secretary of the treasury, James Baker, George Shultz --

[01:22:50] Sheldon Whitehouse: Yeah, Baker, Shultz and Paulson.

[01:22:51] Greg Dalton: -- and Paulson came to Washington presented a plan. Is that a little bit like grandpa coming to town, you have to give him some respect but don't have to do what they say?

[01:22:59] Sheldon Whitehouse: Well, until they have unlimited money to spend and they can say to a Republican Senator, hey, I know those fossil fuel guys are gonna come after you, but I promise you I'm well resourced too and I will have your back. (01:23:15)

That's the conversation that will break this gridlock and that's the conversation that is not yet happening. You look at good companies, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Google, Walmart, Unilever, you can go through a whole list of companies in America that have terrific climate policies, they don't lift a collective finger in Congress. They have given up on Congress and they have given the fossil fuel industry free reign to bully and terrorize around the building. Nobody pushes back. It's really embarrassing for America's corporate leadership.

[01:23:47] Greg Dalton: And if you ask them why don't you weigh in on climate because they certainly tell their customers they're on that side.

[01:23:51] Sheldon Whitehouse: They say they're scared. The confluence between fossil fuel interests and the Republican Party in Congress have gotten so great that they don't know where the boundary is any longer. And if you're Apple, you're worried about hiding your revenues offshore in Ireland and you don't want to speak Orion to come after you on your offshore revenues you want to be left alone on that. So you say virtually nothing in Congress about climate change. And if you're Coca-Cola you have issues making sure there's never gonna be a soda tax so you say nothing about climate change in Congress. Even though your website is terrific, your policies are terrific and you're even trying to influence your own supply chain. So if you put a sign up over congresses which said abandon hope all ye who enter here that is what corporate America sees. And I guess my message today would be you shouldn't think that way, you know, there's safety in numbers and the group of big American corporations that came together to support President Obama in Paris made a difference. They could make the same difference if they get together and come to Washington and say to Republicans we will have your back. We know what the bad guys are going to do. We will have your back. (01:25:07)

John McCain is a hell of a brave man. He does not need to know that he's gonna win before he'll get into a fight. But he'll never sign up for suicide missions either.

[01:25:17] Greg Dalton: Our thanks to Democratic Senator Sheldon Whitehouse. Thank you for joining us senator.

[01:25:21] Sheldon Whitehouse: Thank you. Good to be with you.

[Applause]

[01:25:33] Greg Dalton: Thank you to Senator Sheldon Whitehouse. We're back with Debbie Dooley and May Boeve at Climate One. I'm Greg Dalton. I'd like to ask a little bit about May Boeve, coming here today, were you a little bit reluctant, anxious about sitting down with a Tea Party person not sure what you're gonna get?

[01:25:52] May Boeve: Yeah, I was and I think what we're trying to grapple with right now is and we haven't talk a whole lot about Donald Trump yet in this conversation. And we cannot underscore the devastating impact base having in this country. And so that's what worried me is that I think he has so torn apart the fabric of our democracy and I think so many people are afraid for their future in this country because of his presidency. People who are refugees seeking shelter, people who are immigrants living in this country, women who have less access to reproductive care. And so this is our movement, you know, climate change is not an issue per se. It's something that affects us all. And so in thinking about this conversation and places where I know there are divisions I'm interested in thinking about how do we actually talk about those places where there is not agreement. Because fortunately, Mother Nature is doing the job for us in terms of convincing people about climate change and the economy is doing our job for us when it comes to renewables but what about the rest of us, what about rebuilding our democracy. (01:27:01)

[01:27:02] Greg Dalton: We're gonna hear from some people who were at the Climate March today. The People's Climate March drew tens of thousands of people into the streets just following the March for Science the week before. Here's what people had to say.

[Start Clip]

[01:27:15] Female Speaker: Hi, my name is Melanie Coba [ph]. We came with our kids obviously that climate is the future. So we wanted to set a good example for this with my niece and my daughter. I live on New River in Fort Lauderdale which is downtown Fort Lauderdale. And we have now in full moons the river flows over and overflows my street right in front of me. I live, you know, 2 miles from the beach the rising sea levels compromise our economy, tourism because yeah, a couple of inches of water would devastate our home.

[01:27:42] Female Speaker: I'm Teri from Michigan. And basically I feel like this is my calling to action. And I'm going into something involving the earth and the climate and preserving it. So I feel like this is my nature like I need to be here, this is my calling, this is like the reason why I'm here.

[01:27:58] Male Speaker: Nazer Frazier [ph] and I'm also here with ____ [01:28:00] is actually working on trying to get the oil refinery out of south really. And we're here to show that climate change is real and that it affects a lot of people. Because I know, I myself got asthma and this air is really hurting me.

[01:28:13] Female Speaker: My name is Kalila Barnett. So I work with an environmental justice organization in Boston. And we are here because we believe that there needs to be a just transition away from the fossil fuel economy. We think that working for climate justice is not separate from the social justice movement that they really integrated. And so we want our communities to be able to have access to healthy air, healthy water to drink but we also want people to have jobs and relationships to the economy and to each other that are healthy and sustainable.

[End Clip]

[01:28:47] Greg Dalton: Voices from the People's Climate March in Washington DC. Debbie Dooley, I like to have your thoughts on that march the people you saw what they were saying out there.

[01:28:55] Debbie Dooley: I saw a big diversity of science that we're out there. My favorite one talked about was the one that I had showed you with talked about clean energy equals jobs.
(01:29:09)

And that's something that we could focus on and I enjoyed listening to the Senator. And I will validate what he said. I have had a lot of Republican elected officials tell me privately, I support what you're doing. But if I speak out, I know I'm going to be attacked so I want people to defend me, you know, from the Republican side and he's absolutely right. We have some Republicans that are stepping out on behalf of renewables but they're not seeing any of the, you know, campaign contributions or anything like that like he was talking about. I do, you know, I always encourage it was a peaceful march, there were a lot of folks there that just came in later this afternoon after it was almost over. And, you know, it was a lot of diverse crowd, you know, and I'll have to disagree about Donald Trump because I don't agree with a lot of stuff that he says especially, you know, renewables and climate change. But I do think he can be convinced to promote renewables based on innovation based on job creation.

And Governor Rick Perry, state of Texas there are 100,000 people employed in the renewable energy field in Texas under Rick Perry. And that's something, you know, that I would like to add and, you

know, I put together, he mentioned my work with Green Tea Coalition in Atlanta. I've worked with Sierra Club, I've worked with Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. In Florida we put together a coalition that included Tea Party activist Christian Coalition, Sierra Club, environmental groups, Republican Liberty Caucus coming together for me this earth is not a Republican earth or a Democrat earth. (01:31:16)

It's not a conservative or liberal earth. So we may disagree on 85% of the issues but we owe it to future generations of the world to our great grand children and grandchildren to work together to protect this earth and to lead when it comes to renewables. The United States should not let China lead when it comes to renewables. We should be the ones out there leading.

[Applause]

[01:31:51] Greg Dalton: This is Climate One. Debbie Dooley is a cofounder of the Tea Party movement and founder of the Green Tea Coalition also here with May Boeve, Executive Director of 350.org. I'm Greg Dalton. Greg Wortham was the former mayor of Sweetwater, Texas is a big proponent of wind energy. He says wind could be the economic engine that revitalizes the Great Plains.

[Start Clip]

[01:32:15] Greg Wortham: My name is Greg Wortham. I'm the Executive Director and founder of Texas Wind Energy Clearinghouse. And I was the mayor of Sweetwater, Texas from 2007 to 2014. We're the greenest place on the planet. I get 3,000 megawatts of wind in my town. There's no community like this area that creates as much megawatts of green energy as with it. Ranchers and farmers who are used to using their land for energy they've been caring for the same land for families for a hundred plus years. And the landowners know how to use their land efficiently for wind and solar and oil and natural gas and cattle and agriculture and crops. There are more landowners who wanted that they can fit into the grid.

We have so many new schools, I mean unlimited new schools and campuses would've been close if wind didn't come along. I wanted these people to want red, white and blue solutions not red solutions or blue solutions. That's why we got all the chaos we've got is that people have to sort of like pick a side. I have to be for oil so I can't be for wind. I have to be for wind so I can't be for oil. And that's not getting us anywhere. Wind region is up and on the Great Plains so if you look at our electoral map, it's red. 75% of all wind products are in Republican commercial districts. And so, we're getting it done in that levels that nobody else getting it done by not sort of having forays about it, if we make it just think about it or, you know, march about it the handful of people who could block in the legislature will say, "Wait a minute, I'm told I don't like that. I should create an opposition to that. I should create a bill. We'll stop it."

[End Clip]

[01:34:00] Greg Dalton: May Boeve, your comments there. They're sometimes making a big deal about something makes it hard for people to accept it. Is there some truth to that?

[01:34:09] May Boeve: Well, we've definitely taken the opposing tech.

[Laughter]

To try to make the biggest possible deal we can about the climate crisis so as to build a movement. And I do hear this in some situations and some cities, some states where people are trying to work but actually they've gotten a lot done by doing it rather quietly. You know, we hear this about our colleagues working in Brazil actually where the national government is in a bit of disarray, but locally a lot is happening to stop fracking. So there are examples where this is true, but our fundamental belief is that we actually do need to build political power in order to tackle this issue at scale. I think that's the place I want to come back to is that we don't have a lot of time to see the shift take place. And I think if we just kind of waited for everyone to come around on renewable energy it might not happen fast enough. (01:35:02)

And we're already seeing such devastating impacts of climate change here and around the world. We're talking on a day that is one of the hottest April days on record. And while it's 97° in Washington DC it's 126° in parts of Pakistan. People are already living through conditions that are only going to make their lives more challenging. And so that is the imperative for the scale that is why we focus on building the biggest movement that we can. And so I think if we can continue to emphasize that that's what matters to me, but it's hard to do that if you're quiet about it. And I think reasonable people disagree about the best way to galvanize the public about climate change there's been lots of opinion polling and research about what is the message that will motivate people and it seems that it really depends who you're talking to but at the end of the day I mean we're named after a scientific data point 350 parts per million of carbon in the atmosphere. That says a lot about what we believe that it's hard to fix the problem that you don't talk about. And even in the early days of the Obama administration, people wanted to solve climate change but not talk about it, which to us at a certain point just didn't make any sense. And we've come a long way from those days, but we're still not powerful enough.

[01:36:23] Greg Dalton: Debbie Dooley, I hear that from Republicans that markets are moving in the right direction, just be quiet, give it some time technology will solve this. But, you talked to scientists and it's very, very urgent what's happening here. This system could change very quickly, abrupt climate change can happen. I'd like to hear you address that political power comment that May Boeve just said because the fossil fuel interests as we heard from Senator Whitehouse and you know

have a lot of money and a lot of power and they're not gonna go down easy.

[01:36:49] Debbie Dooley: No, they're not. But I am out there and I'm pretty vocal and a lot of folks are becoming vocal. And for me, I want results. (01:37:00)

I don't want just talking, you know, I wanna find a way where we can meet in the middle and actually obtain results like in Georgia. Georgia is really doing well for solar but and we just passed a couple of years ago a PPI bill which is, you know, sales and leasing of solar. And Republicans passes legislation based on free-market principles and choice. Now it doesn't matter that they didn't believe in climate change but they're taking action to get us to the point that we want to be at. And more and more people were winning the hearts and minds of conservatives. And I think there are a lot of things going on, you know, innovation when it takes something we have I know a lot of conservatives including Tea Party activist that tells me as soon as the battery backup is there, they're disconnecting from the grid and they're going solar and renewables. I just think we have to continue to fight. We have to fight on the federal level and on a state level.

There is so much damage that can be done, you know, a lot of the folks that I witnessed under the Obama administration on the state level I mean were just completely undermine everything President Obama did on the federal level. And we have to be prepared to fight on a state-by-state level. And that's something that we need to do it doesn't matter if they believe in climate change or not as long as they're working with me side-by-side to advance renewables. And I think that is going to happen. I think you're going to see it. I can see a big change in the conservatives movement about renewables.

[01:38:59] Greg Dalton: This is Climate One from the Commonwealth Club. I'm Greg Dalton. Our guests today are Debbie Dooley cofounder of the Tea Party movement and Green Tea Coalition and May Boeve, who is Executive Director of 350.org. (01:39:09)

We're gonna go to our lightning round and ask you a series of quick questions. I'm gonna ask you name something, say a phrase and I'll get your first unfiltered response to that and then we'll go to true or false. So first for Debbie Dooley, the national gasoline tax of \$.18 a gallon. First thought.

[01:39:33] Debbie Dooley: Never pass.

[01:39:35] Greg Dalton: So we have one now but never be raised. May Boeve, the national mandate that requires corn to be blended into gasoline.

[01:39:43] May Boeve: Started as a smart idea to try to support our agriculture industry is now completely unhelpful.

[01:39:51] Greg Dalton: Debbie Dooley, EPA administrator Scott Pruitt.

[01:39:55] Debbie Dooley: I'm not really fond of him.

[Laughter]

[Applause]

[01:40:02] Greg Dalton: May Boeve, Energy Secretary Rick Perry.

[01:40:05] May Boeve: On the wrong side of history.

[Applause]

[01:40:11] Greg Dalton: May Boeve, Ivanka Trump.

[01:40:14] May Boeve: Don't believe a word of it.

[Applause]

[01:40:19] Greg Dalton: Debbie Dooley, Bears Ears National Monument in Utah.

[01:40:23] Debbie Dooley: That National Monument in Utah, I have no clue what it is.

[01:40:29] Greg Dalton: Very controversial. May Boeve, the plan to price carbon pollution from James Baker, George Shultz two former cabinet members under Presidents Reagan and Nixon.

[01:40:39] May Boeve: We need the price to be very high to make a difference at this stage of how the renewable energy sector has a role.

[Applause]

[01:40:46] Greg Dalton: Let's go to true or false. True or false, May Boeve. Overall the Tea Party has had a negative impact on American politics by pushing the country to the right and denigrating the legitimate role of government?

[01:40:57] May Boeve: True. Sorry, Debbie. (01:41:00)

[01:41:01] Greg Dalton: Debbie Dooley, true or false. Russian interference in the 2016 election casts a cloud over the legitimacy of Donald Trump's presidency?

[01:41:09] Debbie Dooley: Absolutely false. They did make me cast my vote.

[01:41:13] Greg Dalton: May Boeve, true or false. The campaign to block Keystone XL Pipeline accomplished very little because oil and money flowed into other projects.

[01:41:23] May Boeve: False.

[01:41:25] Greg Dalton: Debbie Dooley, Citizens United should be repealed because the unfettered spending it allows corrupts our democracy?

[01:41:31] Debbie Dooley: True.

[01:41:32] Greg Dalton: May Boeve, true or false. Some coastal environmentalists should spend more time listening and less time preaching?

[01:41:39] May Boeve: True.

[01:41:40] Greg Dalton: Debbie Dooley, true or false. Oil drilling should be permanently banned in the Alaska National Wildlife Reserve?

[01:41:48] Debbie Dooley: False.

[01:41:49] Greg Dalton: True or false. More American water should be open to offshore oil drilling? For Debbie Dooley.

[01:41:57] Debbie Dooley: I'm a native of Louisiana. False.

[01:42:01] Greg Dalton: Okay. May Boeve, true or false. There is scientific consensus in the United States that eating GMOs is safe for humans?

[01:42:12] May Boeve: False. One more time.

[01:42:15] Greg Dalton: For May Boeve, there's a scientific consensus in the United States that eating GMOs is safe for humans?

[01:42:21] May Boeve: False.

[01:42:23] Greg Dalton: According to the American Association of Science, 89% of scientists say that is true. True or false, Debbie Dooley. Al Gore once called you his friend?

[01:42:34] Debbie Dooley: That is true. He is my friend.

[01:42:38] Greg Dalton: True or false, May Boeve. You like Debbie Dooley more than you thought you would?

[01:42:42] May Boeve: True.

[Laughter]

[Applause]

[01:42:49] Greg Dalton: Last one for Debbie Dooley. You'd like to have a few mint juleps with May Boeve on the porch and get to know her?

[01:42:55] Debbie Dooley: I don't know about mint juleps but something alcoholic as to what I like.
(01:43:00)

[Laughter]

[Applause]

[01:43:02] Greg Dalton: That ends our lightning -- something stronger perhaps?

[01:43:05] Debbie Dooley: Yes.

[01:43:07] Greg Dalton: Alright that ends our lightning round. Let's give them a round of thanks for getting through that.

[Applause]

May Boeve, what's one thing the conservatives should know about you?

[01:43:24] May Boeve: That I want there to be honest conversation about what is going to take to build the kind of inclusive movement that we need and that I'm willing to listen. I really am. And I think we need a level of dialogue that we have lacked. And that's not just true between so-called conservatives and so-called progressives in this country. I think since the election there's been a lot of positive resistance but there's also been a lot of division in the country. And I think if we can take a step back and listen to each other and tell our stories, why do we think what we think. What made us who we are to believe what we believe if we can't get to that level we're not possibly gonna

bridge the kind of device that we have.

So people should know I'm always going to listen and also that a lot of my extended family is very conservative. A lot of them voted for Donald Trump and don't believe in climate change and that's very hard for me. And I wrote them an impassioned letter asking them to please reconsider because they're deeply ethical people, they're deeply moral people and I tried to focus it on those terms. But it's because of that personal experience that I have more reservations about the kind of unity we need to build.

[01:44:41] Greg Dalton: Debbie Dooley, how do you talk to people who don't acknowledge climate change, the language you use?

[01:44:46] Debbie Dooley: I talk to them about free-market competition, choice, innovation, America needs to lead that this technology is the most cost effective technology is clean energy. (01:45:02)

We need to protect clean air and clean water for future generations of Americans and its job creation and you point, I'll point to all the jobs that clean energy employs in this country now. It's a genie that is out of the bottle and it won't go back in. It's way too big for that little bottle for it to go back in and it is something that we need to put aside what you've heard about clean energy. Because I mean let's be honest, conservatives have been brainwashed about clean energy. They've been brainwashed into thinking man's not damaging the environment. So I just put out the facts and show them, you know, this is why these groups are trying to deceive you is because they're being paid to do that by fossil fuel interest.

[01:45:59] Greg Dalton: Debbie Dooley is a cofounder of the Tea Party and the Green Tea --

[Applause]

-- Coalition. This is Climate One from the Commonwealth Club from Washington DC. Today's other guests is May Boeve, Executive Director of 350.org. I am Greg Dalton.

[Applause]

We're gonna go to audience questions in just a minute. So if you'd like to line up to the microphone we'll take your questions. One, one-part question, soon. But first I wanna ask May Boeve, a lot of movements are built on villainizing sort of attacking people. Do you think we need some more

empathy sometimes for people that work in those industries rather than making them bad people which makes it hard to accept your message?

[01:46:44] May Boeve: I do think more movements base on empathy is essential. I also think that when the climate movement started to focus on the fossil fuel industry was when we started to win because I think up until that moment we were focused on only individual actions that people can take. (01:47:02)

You know if you bike more to work, if you compost, if you buy a Prius. Not only where these only reaching a certain portion of the population they were never going to address the problem at the scale that we have to. So when we started acting like a social movement where there were heroes and real villains. I think we've really demonstrated that's where I think there's a lot of alignment actually is the disastrous role the industry is playing. So I think that has been really important and I think that's different than being only empathetic. I think it's about speaking truth to power and revealing something about our politics that is resulting in catastrophic climate change.

[01:47:38] Greg Dalton: This is Climate One from the Commonwealth Club. I'm Greg Dalton. Let's go to our audience questions. Welcome. Step one up.

[01:47:44] Male Participant: Thank you. Thank you so much for hosting this today at Climate One it's been an honor as an audience member. My question is for Mrs. Dooley and that is, so I'm the Third Coast regional coordinator for Citizens' Climate Lobby down in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. We do a lot of outreach to both sides and I love to get you down actually for upcoming conference next year. But I also love to ask you, how can we do, we talk a lot about movement building and reaching out to all of the allies especially for today's march. How can we do a better job of engaging our conservative allies in marches like this and how can we engage them to join us in meetings that we have with members of congress as well?

[01:48:24] Greg Dalton: Thank you. Debbie Dooley.

[01:48:25] Debbie Dooley: That is a good question. And one thing you have to understand, you have to be respectful of each other's opinions. And you talk to them with language they understand. And I did, I vox, vox.com video so if you haven't seen it, please look at that, that would be helpful. And a lot of progressives make the mistake of thinking that just because someone, a conservative denies climate change they make the mistake of believing well that they don't like renewables. That's not true. (01:49:00)

So you need to reach out and have that initial conversation. I would be more than happy to facilitate that. If you want to email me at debbie@energyfreedomusa.org, let's get together on that.

[01:49:17] Greg Dalton: Let's go to our next question. Welcome to Climate One in Washington DC at the Newseum today.

[Applause]

[01:49:22] Male Participant: Hello. My name is Wayne Roth. I came all the way from California for this march and for the March for Science.

[Applause]

And I would like to keep fossil fuels in the ground.

[01:49:31] Greg Dalton: And your question Wayne?

[01:49:32] Male Participant: Mrs. Dooley, I really appreciate your positivity towards solar energy and wind energy and jobs and creating a green energy industry and that that's really good for the country. I think that's gonna happen but there's a larger question. The sign that struck me most at the march was there are no jobs on a dead planet. And Steven Chu who has talked on this show and I've heard talk in other places has said that 4, 5, 6 degree Celsius are non adaptable bad and that's kind of where we're heading. So how do we get people to face the larger issue not just the jobs issue but the larger issue that we have are close to tipping the climate into a place that is will make the planet unlivable?

[01:50:17] Greg Dalton: Thank you.

[01:50:18] Debbie Dooley: Well, you don't focus on why the first thing is to get them to help you advance renewables. And it doesn't matter why they're advancing renewables as long as they're advancing and you're not gonna get everyone to -- I live in Atlanta, there's different roads that lead you to your final destination of Atlanta. The road you take used to be before the 85 bridge collapsed. But the road you take is dependent upon the direction you're coming from. Remember that because if you're talking to a conservative, free-market choice, competition, jobs, innovation. (01:51:00)

[01:51:01] Greg Dalton: Let's have our next question at Climate One today from the Newseum in Washington DC.

[01:51:07] Male Participant: Hi, I'm Josh Bagu [ph], so I'm an attorney from New York. Thank you guys for putting this on this has been a great event. One of the things that I, you know, focusing on right now is that it seems like our current president does not seem to understand that we have checks and balances and that we have different branches of government. And he is planning on deregulating the EPA to what I think are just, you know, really a crazy extent. He doesn't seem to understand that he needs congressional intent to deregulate the EPA and to get rid of these rules --

[01:51:45] Greg Dalton: So your question is?

[01:51:47] Male Participant: My question is, doesn't it make sense to bring a lawsuit against him, saying that his attempts to deregulate and get rid of a lot of environment laws is actually unconstitutional because he doesn't have the congressional intent to do so and that is unconstitutional.

[01:52:07] Greg Dalton: Who'd like to tackle that? May Boeve.

[01:52:09] May Boeve: I think there should be numerous lawsuits against the president for that and many other problems that are happening. So absolutely, let's make it happen.

[01:52:17] Greg Dalton: We have a line behind you. We have 11 minutes left to try to get as many questions as we can in here at Climate One today from Washington DC. Welcome.

[01:52:26] Female Participant: Thank you. I would like to ask you have said that you would like to see government not have a role if I understand it correctly would like free, open marketplace for innovation and ideas. My question is do you think government also ought to stop subsidizing the fossil fuel industry?

[01:52:47] Greg Dalton: Debbie Dooley.

[01:52:48] Debbie Dooley: I never said government. I've never said government shouldn't have some kind of a role, you know, you need research and development, you need innovation but it should not be government controlled. (01:53:01)

My stance is that fossil fuel all energy subsidies need to go. And make energy forms that damage the

environment be fully responsible to pay for any health related caused and any damage to the environment and that is what should happen. And I think --

[Applause]

[01:53:30] Greg Dalton: That's basically what the neoclassical economist Milton Friedman argued that sort of polluters pay. Let's go to our next question. Welcome to Climate One.

[01:53:38] Male Participant: Hi, this is for May. I'm concerned about uniting different groups behind a program that the example in Washington state happened last fall. And are groups that were proponents and progressive thinkers for the climate weren't able to unite specifically with Citizens' Climate Lobby's proposal of a carbon fee and dividend or a refundable carbon fee. What would have to happen to get 350.org support behind that bill so that we could be united on that?

[01:54:11] Greg Dalton: May Boeve.

[01:54:12] May Boeve: This is a really good example on for people not familiar. There was a in the last election an effort to pass the price on carbon in the state of Washington summary, and there's lots of similar efforts around the country. I think this is the kind of the heart of the dispute here is who matters in the movement. And I think in Washington, there was an ongoing yearly effort to try to get a numerous sets of groups to align, labor unions, community groups, communities of color, environmental groups. And I think some of the concern was that not everybody's voice was heard in that dispute. And I think this is where I think people disagree about end justifies the means. However you get there if you don't agree on everything, you can't work together people see that differently. And so I think why we do things like the climate march is to get in the habit of working together with, this was an effort of 900 different organizations, right. (01:55:07)

And unless we get in the practice of learning how to work together and again listen empathetically to the concerns. I think that was part of the issue in Washington is that people didn't feel like they understood where it was coming from they were blindsided and then suddenly it fell apart. And so I don't have the, I wish I had the recipe, right. If we have the recipe, we have the bills that we need, but if I could be more concrete. If you're working in a city right now you're trying to pass climate policy just make sure you've got a wide and very diverse set of groups at the table who represent all the facets of the climate movement and try to build with that set of people.

[01:55:46] Greg Dalton: It's often seen as a very coastal wide a leader's kind of thing. That's May Boeve, Executive Director of 350.org. Let's go to our next question.

[01:55:53] Female Participant: That was my exact question. So I'll change it up a little bit. Thank you both so much. I'm also with Citizens' Climate Lobby and we're very interested in having a bipartisan solution involving carbon pricing. One of the problems is that a lot of people in the environmental groups and especially left-leaning environmental groups don't want to acknowledge that for Republicans to get on board there can't be keeping of revenue or growing of government. And I just think that that needs to happen. We can't just have more democratic sponsored bills with no Republicans on board, it makes no sense.

[01:56:36] Greg Dalton: Thank you. May Boeve, it's true that lot of the politicians who wanna solve climate see revenue streams to fund their favorite projects to address the problem, address environmental injustice. It's happening in California there was lots of money flowing. But are you willing to give up that possibility of revenue for a revenue neutral with a doesn't grow government?

[01:56:57] May Boeve: I guess I wanna flip the conversation a little bit and focus on how do we have enough political power to get the legislation we actually need. And like that's what our work is, we don't really do that much work in Washington. (01:57:08)

We try to build movements so that we can actually demand what we need. And we are so far away from that right now. But the fight over the Keystone Pipeline that wasn't really a policy fight. That was a fight about building power. It was about getting the president to acknowledge that you cannot expand fossil fuel infrastructure. And when Obama made that decision, no other head of state had ever made a decision to cancel on major piece of infrastructure because of climate change. And that was because our movement was powerful. I bet a lot of people in this room got arrested over the Keystone fight or visited Obama at a campaign rally. So that is what we work on and we don't pretend to be every part of the climate movement. I mean we're the immobilizers, right. That's what we help to contribute and thank goodness for Citizens' Climate Lobby and the groups that work on policy and tried to build those coalitions because we need everybody doing this.

So that's what I would say that we are -- and we came close on the last election. I mean we really did. We don't need to relitigate the past but we're not as far away from building the power that we need but we certainly haven't been able to demand the kind of action. But to close on a positive note, you mentioned the piece of legislation introduced by Sanders and Merkley this week hundred percent renewable energy. That's the new call to action. It's not gonna pass tomorrow, it's not gonna pass in this congress but we're starting to set the markers for what we want. And I think there's an appetite in this country for the kind of leader who speak to what we really need and not the kind of middle measure that we think that we can get.

[01:58:37] Greg Dalton: Hundred percent renewable power is on the table in California as well.

[Applause]

I'm Greg Dalton. If you're just joining us this is Climate One from the nation's capital today. Let's go to our next audience question.

[01:58:50] Male Participant: Hello folks. My name is Graham Power. I'm here today from the New Jersey Shore and, you know, we talked a little bit about or should say you did about the role of fear in congress and how that's kind of created a gridlock. (01:59:01)

And that kind of got me thinking, I'm sorry this is a little bit of an abstract question. It's more directed at May but Debbie would love to hear from you as well. How much does fear played in, you know, this grassroots movement that's come about? Where do you see it going, how much more do we need to push it forward?

[01:59:22] Greg Dalton: May Boeve.

[01:59:23] May Boeve: There's a lot of fear. How many people in this room feel this despair about the climate crisis?

[01:59:27] Greg Dalton: Everyone is raising their hand.

[01:59:29] May Boeve: Yeah, everyone is raising their hand. So I think there's no way of talking about this issue without acknowledging that and people are looking at something very scary. Also, different people are motivated by different things. Some people who are active in this movement are really motivated because they wanna fight because they're afraid. Other people are really motivated because they're seeing the vision and they wanna reach for that. And so I think everybody needs a little bit of both and we're all human beings, you know. We wake up one morning feeling great and some days we feel terrible. So I think acknowledging that we all deal with that. I think the question isn't how much more fear do we need but how do we help people have the resilience to keep doing their work when they're afraid for the outcome. And I think that that's why marches matter because you're reminded you're not alone. You're reminded you're among all of these people who you never - I mean I was walking around the march today, I didn't recognize more than five people, you know. So that's wonderful. So that makes me feel less afraid. I hope it made other people feel less afraid but I don't think that's gonna go anywhere. And it's about, yeah, it's about resilience and it's about for many people who are joining this fight for the first time. What is the future we're trying to build? There's a hundred percent renewable idea that we're also captivated by.

[02:00:48] Greg Dalton: Let's go to our next question at Climate One. Welcome.

[02:00:50] Male Participant: Hi, fantastic panel. I'm a west coast liberal of course but I think I've seen the future of the climate conversation and I think she's wearing a green jacket. I really appreciate your comment. (02:01:01)

[Applause]

[02:01:02] Debbie Dooley: Thank you.

[02:01:03] Male Participant: And you too. This conversation has got -- but we already know, I'm already with you. But this is -- here's the question. President Trump has invited you to the White House, each of you. He ask each of you a question. Please tell me one thing that you'd like me to do and one thing you'd like me to stop doing. What are your answers?

[02:01:26] Greg Dalton: Debbie Dooley you're a big supporter of Donald Trump.

[02:01:29] Debbie Dooley: Stay in the Paris Accord and start having the benefits of renewables. And stop talking about fossil fuel all the time while you admit renewables, the impact with renewables.

[02:01:45] Greg Dalton: May Boeve.

[02:01:46] May Boeve: I wouldn't go to the meeting.

[Laughter]

[02:01:58] Greg Dalton: So Debbie Dooley, you think that Elon Musk being on the president's council is a good thing. Other people think that Musk shouldn't be there that that kind of gives a veneer of legitimacy to him. But why do you think that having people like Elon Musk in the president circle is effective and good idea?

[02:02:15] Debbie Dooley: Because I think it's a very good idea. You don't want the only voices heard to be of, you know, the fossil fuel industry and the coal industry. You want alternative voices out there. And I think some of these voices they've had an impact because President Trump promised on

day one he would get us out of the Paris Accord. But he's listening to these other voices there have said you need to stay in it. And I have heard and I'm not a bit surprised that in a lot of those conversations with the renewable energy field, he's trying to talk them into building plants in coal country and put some of the out of work coal miners and give them jobs. (02:03:05)

And I just think it's good to have other voices and his administration don't shy away from it. I mean I did a lot of stuff with, I've done a lot of stuff with progressives and of course I'm such a shop person. But I'm just saying I think that is important because he does listen, and with the fact that Elon Musk has been out there multiple times I think that's very telling.

[02:03:34] Greg Dalton: May Boeve, are there parts or people in the Trump administration you think you can work with?

[02:03:40] May Boeve: Oh I should clarify my earlier comment. I think that there's something about providing legitimacy to administration that we think is causing so many problems. And I don't think we've really talked about that very much here. He's not just any Republican. He's trying to erode the whole consensus about the role that facts play, that our democracy plays, he insults people.

And just leaving aside the policy points for a second but just the way he is using our and so I don't, I'm not comfortable standing for that and I know there's a large portion of our movement that is united there that we actually have to resist the legitimacy of the administration. And so I think there are a number of people also who he's working with who propped that up Rex Tillerson foremost among them. There are certainly people that he's brought in who have been very important in our, I mean, Musk is -- Tesla an extremely important company what they're trying to do and revolutionizing battery storage, we need that for renewables to take off. I will not deny that for one second but I think this isn't any other, this isn't any old political battle that we're in. I wish it was but I don't think that's the moment that we're in.

[02:04:58] Greg Dalton: We have to wrap it up. We've been talking about the changing politics of climate change. I'm Greg Dalton. And my guests today were May Boeve, Executive Director of the environmental group 350.org and Debbie Dooley, President of Conservatives for Energy Freedom and a cofounder of the Tea Party movement. (02:05:11)

We also heard from U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, a democrat from Rhode Island. We recorded this show at the Newseum in Washington DC. Podcast of this and other Climate One shows recorded with the live audience were available wherever you podcast. When you download one, please leave a comment and give us a rating. We wanna know what you think of our conversations about energy, food, water, technology, psychology, and everything climate. Climate One is a sustainability project of the Commonwealth Club of California. Thanks for joining us. We'll see you next time everybody.

[Applause]

[End]