

The Democracy Advocate

A Guide to Strengthening Our Democratic Institutions



2025, Issue 5

Published by: Defending Democracy

Defending Democracy advocates for policies and actions that strengthen democracy and its institutions through: education, mobilization, and outreach.

In an October 5, 2025 opinion piece in the New York Times, Andreas Reckwitz argues that “loss” rather than optimism has become the defining norm in most liberal democracies over the past two decades. We no longer assume the future will be better than the present or the past, but have come to understand that the future may be worse in many respects. The most dramatic narratives of loss are in the environmental sphere. Our future currently is defined in terms of extreme weather, loss of habitats, and the anticipation of future disasters of major proportions. Consequently, a sense of uncertainty leading to what some term - climate grief - prevails. We devote this issue of Democracy Advocate to environmental policy under the Republican/Trump regime, and its implications for environmental degradation locally, nationally and internationally. “Drill baby Drill” and its long-term consequence, “Disaster after Disaster” is a challenge to the resilience of democracy across many domains - health, safety, privacy, economic security, and political stability, for example.

Democracy is on the Ballot: September 27, 2025



Panel on Issues of Importance to Virginia in 2025 Election:
Voting Rights, Health Care, Housing, Public Education, & Immigration

Panelists (L to R) - Danny Axsom; Kerry Redican; Steve Darr; Nick Fischer; and Bill Hackworth. Moderator: Jim Bohland

Another successful event for Defending Democracy!

**Get Involved: For Events of Note,
Go to one of the following sites**

Sources for Upcoming Events Sponsored by Local Activist Groups
Use QR codes or the Website URLs

NRV Citizen Activist Network



Action Hub of the New River Valley



**Looking for and Organization to Engage in your Interests:
JOIN US**

[POWHR](#) (Protect Our Water, Heritage, Rights)

The POWHR Coalition has fought for our mountains, streams, and communities across West Virginia, Virginia, and North Carolina for over ten years. We oppose fossil fuel projects, like the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP), that threaten our home, and work toward a just and renewable future where we make decisions based on our collective needs, not for corporate profit

Readings For Resistance and Resilience:

Here are some books worth spending time reading. Included are those that help us understand authoritarianism and how to resist, and equally important, those that will help us be more resilient personally in times of high anxiety.

Ideology and Environment

The Republican Reversal: Conservatives and the Environment from Nixon to Trump. James Turner and Anthony Isenberg. Harvard Press, 2018. Republicans once took pride in their party's tradition of environmental leadership. Today Republicans denounce climate change as a "hoax" and seek to dismantle the environmental regulatory state they created.

The Republican Brain: The Science of Why They Deny Science-and Reality. Chris Mooney, Trade Paper Press, 2012. Why Republicans' reject scientific data and reality is explored prior to the Trump presidency.

Climate Disasters and Trump Disasters. William McPherson. Amazon book, 2025. Comprehensive discussion of all federal climate initiatives by agency. Also, a quick summary of climate actions world-wide.

What We Can Know: A Novel. Ian McEwan. Knopf, 2025. Excellent new dystopian novel about climate change and lost love in the early 22nd century, by Booker prize-winning British author of *Atonement*.

Paper Girl: A Memoir of Home and Family in a Fractured America. Beth Macey, Penquin Books, 2025 A combination of memoir and reporting, her book is about the political-cultural divide ripping America apart. Macy formerly worked at the Roanoke Times. Hollins college grad.

Orwell: 2+2=5. New film by Raoul Peck. The life of George Orwell and how his political observations are still relevant today.

Corruption, Fraud, & Stupidity

What's With Those Windmills

Some of the most corrupt and stupid decisions made by the Republicans and the Trump administration are those centered on our energy policy. While much of the world is moving away from carbon-based fuels to renewables (e.g., wind, solar, and geothermal), Trump and his acolytes have not only defunded renewable programs and cancelled policies designed to shift away from coal and gas, but they have made numerous false statements about the cost and efficiency of renewables (see our piece by John Randolph). Why? As the [Yale Climate Connections](#) reported in January of this year, the coal and gas industry contributed \$26 million to the officials running for national office in 2024. Of that \$2.7 million went to Trump's campaign, and approximately \$23.4 million to Republicans running for Congress. [Climate Power](#) puts the number much higher - \$450 million by coal and gas industries to Trump and Republicans. Money talks and big money corrupts! Still, like most things with Trump, it is also personal. He has raged against windmills since 2013 because according to him, "they are ugly monsters" ruining the views of nature from his Aberdeenshire golf course. The natural landscape is, of course, greatly enhanced by the golf greens, bunkers, and buildings of his resort!!

Opinion - Making Sense of Nonsense By T Pain

I am delighted to have this issue's OpEd provided by John Randolph. John is an emeritus professor from the Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning program at Virginia Tech. He also served as Director of the Coal and Energy Center, and led Virginia Tech's efforts in creating a sustainable campus environment.

Trump and Climate Change: Ideology versus science and self-interest versus the common good

President Trump has never been friendly to environmental causes. He has advocated for deregulation of all environmental laws and rules and defunded as many environmental programs as possible, especially those promoting clean energy and climate change mitigation.

Presidents have a range of motivations for their actions, policies, and opinions. Largely these motivations have been rational and based on evidence supported by science and analysis that such actions and policies enhance the well-being of the nation and its citizenry as measured by economic, public health, security, and social factors.

Not this president.

His motivations can be captured in five simple preferences:

- Ideology over Science
- Self-interest over Common Good
- “Alternative Facts” over Truth
- Short-Term Rewards over Long-Term Prosperity
- USA over The World

The best way to frame these motivations is in his own words taken from his September 23, 2025, speech to the United Nations General Assembly along with some countering evidence.

Trump:

“We’re getting rid of the falsely named renewables. By the way, they’re a joke. They don’t work. They’re too expensive. They’re not strong enough to fire up the plants that you need to make your country great. And I’m telling you, that if you don’t get away from the green energy scam, your country is going to fail. And you’re supposed to make money with energy, not lose money. You lose money, the governments have to subsidize. You can’t put them out without massive subsidies.”

Countering Evidence

- From 2022 to 2025, 90-95% of new global **and** U.S. utility electricity generating capacity additions were renewables: solar (~60%), wind (~20%), and battery storage (~15%) (see e.g. [U.S. EIA](#))
- Why? Renewables are the cheapest! “On an unsubsidized \$/MWh basis (levelized cost of electricity (LCOE)), renewable energy remains the most cost-competitive form of generation. As such, renewable energy will continue to play a key role in the buildout of new power generation in the U.S.” ([Lazard, LCOE](#), June 2025)
- Global solar capacity is expanding at 30%/yr, doubling every 2.3 years at that rate.
- [“The Clean Energy Revolution is Unstoppable”](#) (Wall Street Journal, Feb 28, 2025)

Trump:

“And I give a lot of credit to Germany. Germany was being led down a very sick path, both on immigration and on energy. They were going green and they were going bankrupt. And the new leadership came in and they went back to where they were, with fossil fuel and with nuclear, which is good.”

Countering Evidence

- 70% of Germany’s electricity capacity is renewables (compared to 27% in U.S.) and 59% of their generation is renewables (compared to 24% in US).
- Germany eliminated all nuclear power capacity in 2023.

Trump:

“I unleashed massive energy production and signed historic executive orders to hunt for oil, but we don’t have to do much hunting because we have the most oil of any nation anywhere, oil and gas, in the world.”

Self Interest

- Trump publicly asked fossil fuel industry executives for \$1 billion, promising favorable policymaking in return
- Fossil fuel interests gave \$96 million to Trump's campaign and \$19 million to his inauguration

Trump:

"And if you add coal, we have the most of any nation in the world. Clean -- I call it clean beautiful coal." On September 29, Trump announced plans to increase mining and burning of coal and rolling back regulations on coal-related air and water pollution and coal-mining safety.

Countering Evidence

- In 2024, coal generated 15% of U.S. electricity; down from 51% in 2000 and 45% in 2010.
- Estimate of the levelized cost of electricity from existing coal power plants in the U.S. (\$73/MWh) is more than the LOCE from new solar (\$38-78MWh) and wind \$37-83/MWh) farms.
- Coal is a dying industry and for good reason. Premature deaths from coal power emissions were 6,000-13,000 per year in 2000-2010 and with reduced use dropped to 1,600 per year by 2020.
- Coal mining employs about 40,000 workers in 2024, while the wind industry employs 120-150,000 and the solar industry employs 250-300,000.

Trump:

"It's the greatest con job ever perpetrated on the world, in my opinion. Climate change, ...all of these predictions made by the United Nations and many others, often for bad reasons, were wrong. They were made by stupid people that have cost their country's fortunes and given those same countries no chance for success. The carbon footprint is a hoax made up by people with evil intentions and they're heading down a path of total destruction. I've been right about everything."

Countering Evidence

Global warming is real and significant:

- 24 of the hottest 25 years ON RECORD occurred 2001-2025 (the 25th was 1998)
- 2024 was 1.55°C warmer than 1850-1900 (preindustrial) period (delta T) exceeding UN IPCC's aspirational goal of +1.5°C for 2100, and the last decade is likely to have been the hottest in 125,000 years ([Esper et al. 2024](#))

Climate change impacts are massive and growing:

- From 2020 to 2024 in the U.S. there were 117 climate-related disasters that each cost greater than \$1 billion damage, totaling \$747 billion and 2520 deaths

Global warming is caused primarily by rising atmospheric CO₂ levels from burning fossil fuels:

- CO₂ levels have increased from 370 ppm in 2000 to 430 ppm in 2025.
- UN IPCC: holding to 450 ppm by 2100 gives a 50% chance of keeping delta T within 2°C.
- CO₂ emissions increased from 25 billion metric tons (bmt) in 2000 to 37 bmt in 2024 and continue to increase, with China now contributing 30% and the U.S. 11%.

Trump:

"In closing, I just want to repeat that the high cost of so-called green renewable energy is destroying a large part of the free world, and a large part of our planet. The entire globalist concept of asking successful industrialized nations to inflict pain on themselves and radically disrupt their entire societies must be rejected completely and totally, and it must be immediate."

Countering Evidence

- Trump thinks he's "been right about everything," but he relies on misinformation, ideology, and self-interest to mask reality and advance his agenda which is counter to the common good and long-term prosperity.

Readers Forum

We welcome your feedback on the newsletter. In particular, we would like suggestions for feature stories, books, websites, opinions, etc. Also, if you wish to write something for us, send it along for review. If this Democracy Advocate was forwarded from a friend and you would like to be on the Defending Democracy activist list, drop a line to our email address with your name, email address, and zip code.

Send all correspondence to our email address: defendingdemocracy124@gmail.com