

## Global Warming Starts to Divide G.O.P. Contenders

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Published: October 17, 2007

While many conservative commentators and editorialists have mocked concerns about [climate change](#), a different reality is emerging among Republican presidential contenders. It is a near-unanimous recognition among the leaders of the threat posed by global warming.

Within that camp, however, sharp divisions are developing. Senator [John McCain](#) of Arizona is calling for capping gas emissions linked to warming and higher fuel economy standards. Others, including [Rudolph W. Giuliani](#) and [Mitt Romney](#), are refraining from advocating such limits and are instead emphasizing a push toward clean coal and other alternative energy sources.

All agree that nuclear power should be greatly expanded.

The debate has taken an intriguing twist. Two candidates appealing to religious conservatives, former Gov. [Mike Huckabee](#) of Arkansas and Senator [Sam Brownback](#) of Kansas, call for strong actions to ease the effects of people on the climate, at times casting the effort in spiritual terms just as some evangelical groups have taken up the cause.

The emergence of climate change as an issue dividing Republicans shows just how far the discussion has shifted since 1997, when the Senate voted, 95 to 0, to oppose any international climate treaty that could hurt the American economy or excused China from responsibilities.

The debate among Republicans is largely not about whether people are warming the planet, but about how to deal with it.

The issue inserted itself into the presidential campaign on Friday with the announcement that [Al Gore](#) had won the Nobel Peace Prize for work highlighting the threat posed by climate change.

The leading Democratic candidates rushed to praise Mr. Gore, underlying how that party has sought to seize the issue with proposals like higher standards for fuel mileage and taxing emissions of carbon dioxide.

The issue had been gradually bubbling up among leading Republicans as top corporations, including some in petroleum, have been pushing to address it.

Mr. McCain, who acknowledges that he knew little about the climate problem when he sought his party's presidential nomination eight years ago, held a Senate hearing on climate change in 2001 and quickly became a convert to the notion that carbon emissions were warming the planet.

In recent years, he has fought to introduce measures for caps on dangerous emissions. Last week, Mr. McCain promised to demand sharply higher fuel standards from the automobile industry.

He also promised to have the United States join the international climate treaty, the Kyoto Protocol, although only on the condition that India and China join, too. Many experts say that condition is unlikely to be met at the moment.

"I don't know what it is going to be like the rest of my life on this planet," Mr. McCain said at the Global Warming and Energy Solutions Conference on Saturday in Manchester, N.H. "But I can tell you this. I have had enough experience and enough knowledge to believe that unless we reverse what is happening on this planet, my dear friends, we are going to hand our children a planet that is badly damaged."

Mr. Romney and Mr. Giuliani say little about the potential dangers of climate change and almost nothing about curbing emissions of heat-trapping gases like carbon dioxide. They talk almost exclusively about the need for independence from foreign oil as a necessity for national security.

[Fred D. Thompson](#), after mocking the threat in April, said more recently that “climate change is real” and suggested a measured approach until more was known about it.

In the tangled Republican race, Mr. Giuliani and Mr. Romney have been much more hesitant to criticize policies of President Bush, who in his two presidential campaigns said that more study of climate change was needed before imposing restrictions on heat-trapping gases.

On the campaign trail, Mr. Giuliani has said, “I do believe there’s global warming,” but in a speech on energy in the summer in Waterloo, Iowa, he had hardly a word about the environment. Instead, he focused on tapping domestic sources of energy, including coal, which is considered a major contributor to global warming.

“Ethanol, biodiesel, clean coal, nuclear power, more refineries, conservation,” Mr. Giuliani said. “There’s no one single solution. But each one of these has to be expanded 10 percent, 15 percent, 20 percent.

“America has more coal reserves than Saudi Arabia has oil reserves. Aren’t we safer and better off relying on our own coal reserves than on a part of the world that is a threat to us?”

Mr. Romney has voiced an almost identical theme, with the two candidates saying they will lead an effort to make the United States energy independent that will be on the scale of putting a man on the Moon or the race to build an atomic bomb.

To illustrate the commitment to new fuel sources, a clip of Mr. Romney’s forum in April in Derry, N.H., has been posted on his campaign’s Web site.

“That is much broader than one form of fuel like ethanol,” Mr. Romney said. “I believe we have to be developing more energy sources ourselves, which would include offshore drilling and drilling in ANWR, nuclear power, biodiesel, biofuel, ethanol, cellulosic ethanol, probably liquefied coal. We have enormous supplies of coal.”

Mr. McCain said in his speech on Saturday that he wanted to push for alternative fuels, but he implied that more needed to be done to protect the environment.

One priority, he said, would be to establish “cap and trade,” a system in which corporations are essentially rewarded for deep cuts in harmful emissions.

Mr. McCain has written a bill on that and forced two votes, losing both.

In addition to calling for improved fuel efficiency, which he repeated last week in a speech in Detroit, Mr. McCain said he supported an effort to develop an automobile battery that can travel 150 to 200 miles without a charge and would finance the research and development for that.

The senator opposes a measure that many environmentalists desire, a carbon tax, most likely as another gasoline tax. He told the warming and energy conference that he generally opposed new taxes but that he also believed that poor workers who tended to commute to work longer distances would be disproportionately affected.

Mr. McCain said it took a few months of hearings as a member of the Senate Commerce Committee after the 2000 election for him to realize the threat from climate change. Asked about Mr. Giuliani and Mr. Romney’s commitment to energy independence, he said voters should look at their records.

“What were they doing in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006?” Mr. McCain asked.