



Better Future Project

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Politicians and Their Professors

The Discrepancy between Climate Science and Climate Policy

By Craig S. Altemose and Hayley Browdy



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About This Report

This report seeks to highlight the discrepancy between the overwhelming consensus on climate change that exists among the nation's scientific community and the lack of action by federal leaders. Past studies have shown that 97-98% of climate scientists who publish in peer-reviewed journals agree with the consensus that climate change is real, happening now, and man-made. Since many politicians seem to disregard the views of such scientific "elites" as a whole, we decided to compare politicians' views on climate change to those of the climate experts at their alma maters. These politicians clearly valued the expertise of the academics at their schools enough that they chose to (usually) spend tens of thousands of dollars and up to four years of their lives absorbing knowledge from these institutions' experts. We thought that even if these politicians choose to disregard the consensus of national experts, they might be persuaded by the consensus of the higher education institutions in which they trusted enough to invest great amounts of their time and money. This report and the research supporting it are available online at www.betterfutureproject.org/resources.

About Better Future Project

Better Future Project is a young organization dedicated to supporting and mobilizing a social movement to end society's addiction to deadly energy. Burning fossil fuels costs the lives of tens of thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of human beings each year from the direct health effects of air and water pollution. These same fuels are also the primary contributors to climate change, which threatens life on earth as we know it, and threatens to kill countless millions of people. Better Future Project believes that society can and must build a better future without fossil fuels to improve the health and security of our people and prevent climate catastrophe. *Politicians and Their Professors* is Better Future Project's fourth report.

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Introduction

This report compares the views of politicians on climate change to those of the academics at their alma maters. It is meant to examine the similarity or disparity between what academic experts are publishing and what politicians - who entrusted these same institutions with their personal education - are saying.

Of the 2,086 professors surveyed to produce this report, 203 were found to be publishing climate change-related research in peer-reviewed journals. 202 of these 203 climate scientists (99.5%) agree that climate change is real and humans are responsible. This compares favorably to previous studies which have demonstrated a 97-98% consensus of the climate science community as a whole.

In most cases, the politicians examined in this report agree with their academic institutions' climate experts. However, the current stances of seven politicians either at times publicly question whether or not the consensus exists, or fail to take a position on it - Presidential candidate Mitt Romney, Senator Scott Brown, House incumbents Richard Neal, Stephen Lynch, and Bill Keating, and House candidates Sean Bielat, Joe Kennedy III, and Richard Tisei.

This report repeatedly cites “the climate consensus”, referring to the global scientific consensus climate change is real and manmade. This consensus was established in 2010 by a study that analyzed the results of the 1,372 preeminent climate researchers and their data. This study found that “97-98% of the climate researchers most actively publishing in the field support the tenets of ACC [Anthropogenic Climate Change] outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.”

This report is not meant as an endorsement or rejection of any of the politicians described above. Rather, it merely seeks to demonstrate the gap that exists between the scientific community and the political community on the issue of climate science. Nothing in this report should be construed as an endorsement of any candidate for any position. Rather, this report is an endorsement of the idea that science should inform policy, and that candidates who reject the consensus of our nation's experts should publicly declare which sets of experts they look to when making policy decisions. It is our hope that through this report, more attention will be paid to the consensus of the scientific community, that politicians who support that consensus will see affirmation of their stances, and that those who disagree with it will be challenged to explain precisely where they are getting their information from.



Methodology

The scope of this report includes the fifteen incumbents and candidates for the Senate and House of Representatives from the state of Massachusetts as well as the two Presidential candidates for the 2012 election.

We first identified the Presidential candidates and all Congressional Representatives, Senators, and candidates for the House or Senate in Massachusetts. We then collected biographical research on each politician to determine which colleges and universities s/he attended. We identified each school's natural science department (which included biology, chemistry, and physics in every case) and each school's geology, earth, or environmental sciences department(s). Using the websites of the professors in these departments, we determined which of the associate, assistant, and regular professors were involved in climate change research (visiting and emeritus professors were excluded from our analysis). When we identified a professor involved in climate change research, we then read relevant papers which these scientists had published in peer-reviewed journals to determine whether or not they agreed that climate change is real and man-made. If the papers themselves did not explicitly endorse or contradict the consensus, we would research public statements the scientists had made regarding climate change. The results allowed us to calculate the percentages of scientists at each school who agreed or disagreed with the climate consensus.

Results

99.5% of the 203 climate scientists from the alma maters of Massachusetts' federal politicians and national Presidential candidates agree that climate change is real and man-made.

Of the sixteen current and prospective Massachusetts politicians evaluated, nine of them have statements that show support for the climate consensus. Six current and aspiring politicians—Sean Bielat, Joe Kennedy III, Richard Tisei, Stephen Lynch, Richard Neal, and Bill Keating—have not explicitly affirmed or denied the consensus, and one - Scott Brown has alternatively endorsed, denied, and endorsed the consensus. Thus, while the experts at their universities have a 99.5% consensus, the prospective elected representatives of Massachusetts - which is widely seen as one of the nation's most educated and progressive states - have only 56.25% consensus among them that climate change is real, happening, and caused by people. And the lack of public consensus reaches across both parties.

Of the 2012 Democratic and Republican Presidential candidates, President Barack Obama agrees with the expert consensus on climate change, along with the 100% scores at his alma maters Columbia, Occidental, and Harvard. Former Governor Mitt Romney has alternatively denied and supported the consensus, which 97.6% of the experts at his educational institutions agree with (100% of the climate experts at Harvard and Stanford agreed with the consensus, as did 86% of the experts at Brigham Young University). Thus, depending on how former-Governor Romney chooses to look at the matter, either 97-98% of all national experts, 97.6% of experts at the universities he attended, or 86% of the experts at his primary undergraduate institution (BYU) agree that climate change is real and manmade.

Politicians



John Kerry ✓

Senior Senator of Massachusetts
Alma Maters: Yale, Boston College

“... The challenge is more real, and the damage of climate change more pervasive, but we are further behind than ever in addressing the issue. With each passing day, the danger and the urgency only grow.”

At Yale: 31 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus
At Boston College: 1 professor has published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

He supports the established findings of the academics at both universities he attended as well as the consensus established by the broader scientific community.

Scott Brown ?

Junior Senator of Massachusetts
Alma Maters: Tufts University, Boston College

“...I think the globe is always heating and cooling. It’s a natural way of ebb and flow. The thing that concerns me lately is some of the information I’ve heard about potential tampering with some of the information. I just want to make sure if in fact . . . the earth is heating up, that we have accurate information, and it’s unbiased by scientists with no agenda.” (2009) “I do believe man plays a role.” (2012)

At Tufts: 4 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At Boston College: 1 professor has published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

His statements have both supported and not supported the established findings of the academics at both universities he attended as well as the broader scientific community.





Elizabeth Warren ✓

Democratic Candidate for Massachusetts Senate 2012
Alma Maters: George Washington University, University of Houston, Rutgers University

“The science is unmistakable: Earth's climate is changing and human activities are contributing to climate change.”

At GWU: 9 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At Houston: 7 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At Rutgers: 2 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

She supports the established findings of the academics at all three universities she attended as well as the consensus established by the broader scientific community.

Richard Neal ?

United States Representative first elected in 1988 Running for Massachusetts's 1st Congressional District
Alma Maters: American International College, University of Hartford

“...Legislation will lead our consumers, our businesses, and our communities towards smarter, cleaner, and more efficient energy use.”

At AIC: Of professors surveyed, there were none publishing on climate change.

At Hartford: Of professors surveyed, there were none publishing on climate change.

While his voting record suggests that he does in fact acknowledge that climate change is occurring, he has not outright expressed agreement with the climate consensus at his alma maters and of the broader scientific community.





John Olver ✓

Outgoing U.S. Representative for Massachusetts's 1st Congressional District
Alma Mater: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Tufts University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

"Planet earth is warming. Since 1850, the burning of fossil fuels, such as coal, oil, and natural gas, to produce energy has increased 100 times as the world has industrialized to serve its more than 6 billion and growing population."

At RPI: 2 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At Tufts: 4 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At MIT: 18 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

He supports the established findings of the academics at all three universities he attended as well as the consensus established by the broader scientific community.

Jim McGovern ✓

United States Representative first elected in 1991 Running for Massachusetts's 2nd Congressional District
Alma Mater: American University

"Devoting portions of revenues from a cap-and-trade system to investments in international adaptation to those countries most vulnerable is a clear signal to the world that the U.S. is ready to lead in combating global climate change."

At American: Of professors surveyed, there were none publishing on climate change.

His public statements show he believes in climate change. His alma mater does not have any professors publishing on climate change so we cannot compare his position directly to his alma mater's academics, but he does agree with the consensus established by the broader scientific community.





Niki Tsongas ✓

United States Representative first elected in 2007
 Running for Massachusetts's 3rd Congressional District
 Alma Maters: Smith College, Boston University

“Global warming is no longer an academic question for scientists to ponder. It’s a very real crisis that requires American leadership.”

At Smith: 3 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus
 At BU: 15 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

She supports the established findings of the academics at both universities she attended as well as the consensus established by the broader scientific community.

Barney Frank ✓

Outgoing U.S. Representative for Massachusetts's 4th Congressional District
 Alma Mater: Harvard University

H.R. 1078 (101st): Global Warming Prevention Act of 1989
 “To establish national policies and support and encourage international agreements that implement energy and natural resource conservation strategies appropriate to preventing the overheating of the Earth's atmosphere, known as the greenhouse effect.”

At Harvard: 16 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

His voting record shows that he believes that climate change is occurring, although he has not spoken officially about it. He thus supports the established findings of the academics at the university he attended as well as the consensus of the broader scientific consensus.



Sean Bielat ?



Republican Candidate for U.S. Congress in Massachusetts's 4th Congressional District
Alma Maters: Georgetown University, Harvard University, University of Pennsylvania

“There are some who believe that there is no scientific evidence of climate change resulting from human activity; there are many who take the other view. If new technologies and innovations create new efficiencies and economic growth, and if there is even a remote possibility of a connection between current environmental changes and human activity—then why wouldn’t we want to pursue these technologies?”

At Georgetown: 8 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At Harvard: 16 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At UPenn: 9 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

Contrary to the scientific consensus at his alma maters and the broader community, he does not take a specific view on the subject matter but instead says that there’s potential for both sides.

Joe Kennedy III ? *

Democratic Candidate for United States Congress in Massachusetts’s 4th Congressional District
Alma Maters: Stanford University, Harvard University

At Stanford: 19 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At Harvard: 16 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

*He has not expressed his views on climate change thus far in his campaign for Congress. *Since the research for this report was concluded, Kennedy has expressed a belief that “climate change is occurring” and implied, though did not explicitly state, that humans were responsible.*





Ed Markey ✓

United States Representative first elected in 1976
 Running for Massachusetts's 5th Congressional District
 Alma Mater: Boston College

"...Global warming has not waited. It has accelerated. Climate change is occurring as we speak, and the greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere will continue to warm the planet for decades. In the United States and the world, we must work together to successfully combat climate change."

At BC: 1 professor has published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

He supports the established findings of the academics at the university he attended as well as the consensus established by the broader scientific community.

John Tierney ✓

United States Representative first elected in 1996
 Running for Massachusetts's 6th Congressional District
 Alma Maters: Salem State, Suffolk University

"...Continue to be strong supporters of environmental regulations that protect the air, clean the water, and attack the difficult issue of climate change by restricting emissions in various ways."

At Salem State: 1 professor has published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus
 At Suffolk: 1 professor has published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

He supports the established findings of the academics at both universities he attended as well as the consensus established by the broader scientific community.





Richard Tisei ?

Republican Candidate for United States Congress in Massachusetts's 6th Congressional District
Alma Mater: American University

At American: Of professors surveyed, there were none publishing on climate change.

He has not expressed his views on climate change thus far in his campaign for Congress.

Mike Capuano ✓

United States Representative first elected in 1998
Running for Massachusetts's 7th Congressional District
Alma Maters: Dartmouth College, Boston College

“...We must adopt clean sources of energy that can provide the power we need without endangering our climate...It is also important to support climate change research and develop standards for measuring greenhouse gas emissions so we can better understand historic climate change and analyze future events.”

At Dartmouth: 12 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus
At BC: 1 professor has published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

He supports the established findings of the academics at the universities he attended as well as the consensus established by the broader scientific community.





Stephen Lynch ?

United States Representative first elected in 2001
Running for Massachusetts's 8th Congressional District
Alma Maters: Wentworth Institute of Technology, Boston College,
Harvard University

“HR 2454. 111th Congress. To create clean energy jobs, achieve energy independence, reduce global warming pollution and transition to a clean energy economy. Project Vote Smart Summary: Stephen Lynch voted YES on 26 June 2009.”

At WIT: Of professors surveyed, there were none publishing on climate change.

At BC: 1 professor has published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At Harvard: 16 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

While his voting record suggests that he does in fact acknowledge that climate change is occurring, he has not outright expressed agreement with the climate consensus at his alma maters and of the broader scientific community.

William R. Keating ?

United States Representative first elected in 2010
Running for Massachusetts's 9th Congressional District
Alma Maters: Boston College, Suffolk University

“I am committed to the use of clean renewable sources of energy so that we can reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, create new jobs, and enhance our environmental security. I'll fight to ensure that our automobiles are fuel efficient and work hard to pass sensible legislation.”

At BC: 1 professor has published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At Suffolk: 1 professor has published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

While his position on the environment supports the established findings of the academics at both universities he attended, he has not outright expressed agreement with the climate consensus at his alma maters and of the broader scientific community.





Barack Obama ✓

President of the United States

Alma Maters: Occidental College, Columbia University, Harvard University

“The issue of climate change is one that we ignore at our own peril. There may still be disputes about exactly how much we’re contributing to the warming of the earth’s atmosphere and how much is naturally occurring, but what we can be scientifically certain of is that our continued use of fossil fuels is pushing us to a point of no return.”

At Occidental: 8 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At Columbia: 30 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At Harvard: 16 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

He supports the established findings of the academics at all three universities he attended as well as the consensus established by the broader scientific community.

Mitt Romney ?

2012 Republican Candidate for President of the United States

Alma Maters: Stanford University, Brigham Young University, Harvard University

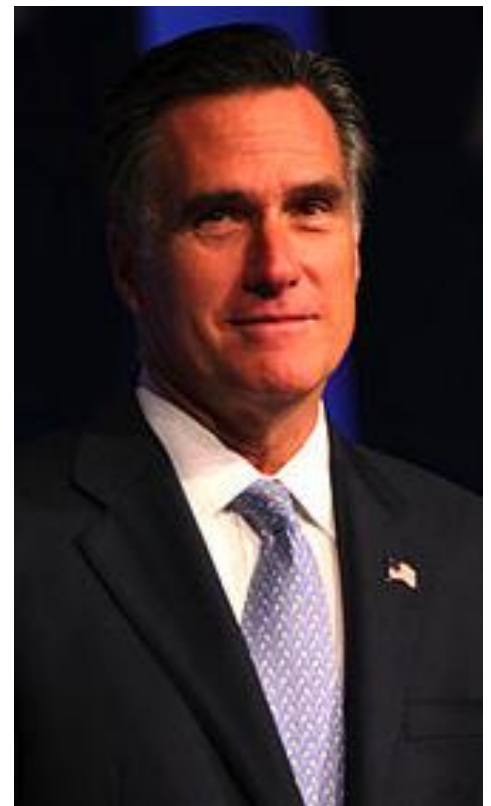
“My view is that we don’t know what’s causing climate change on this planet. And the idea of spending trillions and trillions of dollars to try to reduce CO2 emissions is not the right course for us.” (2011) “I am not a scientist myself, but my best assessment of the data is that the world is getting warmer, that human activity contributes to that warming, and that policymakers should therefore consider the risk of negative consequences.” (2012)

At Stanford: 19 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

At BYU: 7 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **86%** agree with the climate change consensus

At Harvard: 16 professors have published in peer reviewed journals on the subject of climate change; of those who have published, **100%** agree with the climate change consensus

Mitt Romney seems to change his position on the established findings of 97.6% of the academics at universities he attended and on the consensus of the broader scientific community.





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