

Making climate solutions durable means making them bipartisan. We can't go it alone

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Cooperation. Good faith. Trust. Over our combined years of experiences in the U.S. House of Representatives - and frankly, in life - we have learned that these simple, yet key values go a long way toward generating positive outcomes.

One of us identifies right-of-center and one as left-of-center. But coming from different sides of the aisle - and opposite coasts - did not prevent us from forging a working partnership when we were colleagues and began a life-long friendship.

The bipartisan spirit that allowed a Republican from South Carolina and a Democrat from Washington shouldn't be rare, especially when it comes to climate change. That's the view we will bring to the Columbia Basin Badger Club's public online forum beginning at noon on Feb. 15.

You don't have to be a professionally trained scientist to see that climate change is happening. Whether it's more severe droughts in the fields of the Palouse, Western fire seasons starting earlier and ending later, disappearing glaciers in the Cascades, sea-level rise along the coast of South Carolina, increasingly hot summers or more intense hurricanes - the signs are there.

The real question is do we have the integrity and courage to make difficult decisions so the lives of our children and grandchildren will be better, not worse?

Recently, more GOP lawmakers have come to the table to talk about climate solutions based on their foundational principles. And there are some Democratic lawmakers who are ready to proactively reach across the aisle.

Climate change doesn't care if you live in a "red state" or a "blue state" or if you have an R or a D next to your name. We must work together if we're to tap into American ingenuity to solve the existential challenge of this generation.

Bipartisan solutions are inherently more durable. And durability is good for everyone involved, from utilities - which will make capital investments in equipment and technology to reduce emissions - to future generations looking for a stable climate and preservation of our natural resources.

Admittedly, we're dealing with a polarization hangover when it comes to climate change. The coming of the Great Recession and electoral disappointments caused the GOP to largely abandon the climate conversation at the end of 2008. Prior to that there was bipartisan consensus on the need to address climate change. In early 2008, Nancy Pelosi and Newt Gingrich even cut an ad together that advocated action.

Sadly, that spirit evaporated and was replaced by acrimony.

The good news is that longer-time horizon Republicans are returning to the conversation, responding to the desire for climate solutions from young conservatives. Those Republicans, however, face an immediate obstacle in Donald Trump, a very short-time horizon actor.

Whether it's sitting across from each other in a House Science Committee hearing or voting in the House chamber, we know problems don't get solved unless one or both sides drop political motivations or forget the willful ignorance that's helping pass the problems on to the next generation by insisting on a one-sided solution.

The time is now for both sides to listen to each other, clearly look at the evidence and identify alternatives, seek common ground, and focus on the greater good for all.

You can register for this event, which will include a Q&A session, at columbiabasinbadgers.com to receive a confirmation and links to join the Zoom forum and a half-hour "Table Talk" op-mic session afterward. The cost is \$5 for nonmembers, while club members can join for free.

Former U.S. Rep. Brian Baird, D-Washington (1999-2011), chairs the National Museum and Center for Service which seeks to create a place in our nation's capital to celebrate and inspire service. Former U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis, R-South Carolina (1993-1999, 2005-2011), directs republicEn.org, a growing group of conservatives who care about climate change.

Caption:

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Working across the aisle may be the only way to forge durable climate solutions.