

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE:

3 TRUTHS THAT FLIP THE SCRIPT ON CLIMATE ISSUES

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I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I'M TIRED of all the bad news. Everywhere we turn, we're told the planet is burning up, the waters are rising and time is running out to stave off our climate doom. It seems like everyone, from politicians and news anchors to celebrities and TikTok stars, is preaching the same apocalyptic message — and as energy professionals, you bear the brunt of the vitriol. It's exhausting.

But the sky isn't falling, and in fact, there's never been a better time in human history to be alive.

If we change anything in 2024, let's change the narrative on energy. Let's stop apologizing for producing and sharing the energy the world needs to survive and thrive. More importantly, let's resist the urge to greenwash just to save face. Instead, let's start communicating effectively on climate change — focusing on sound science, on effective policymaking and on the ultimate importance of human flourishing in all business and policy decisions.

Let's change the conversation from whether and how fast the world is ending to how we can all work together to promote human flourishing in our communities and around the world. Here are three key messages you and your associates need to know to flip the script on climate issues.

1. Affordable, reliable energy is the environment's hero.

Whether I'm speaking to a high school science class or senior members of Congress, when I mention that America is a world leader in clean air, the response is usually something along the lines of, "Yeah, right." Unfortunately, this is one of the best-kept secrets in political spheres.

Over the last 50 years, America has cut air pollution by nearly 80% — all while our economy, population, vehicle usage and energy consumption have skyrocketed. America's cities are no longer shrouded by the soot and fumes of the Industrial Revolution despite being a global economic powerhouse and energy producer. Of developed countries, only Canada and Australia, whose populations and economies are a mere fraction of ours, can match our air quality. In fact, our air pollution is so low, it's now nearly indistinguishable from natural levels.

If the COVID-19 pandemic brought us anything good, it was proof of this environmental success. During the 2020 shutdowns, which eliminated 40% or more of vehicle traffic from our roads and paused significant industrial activity, air quality didn't improve. In some cities, particulate matter levels actually went up, showing that dust and pollen have a far greater effect on America's air quality than any human activity. That's not the case in other countries like India and China, where wearing masks was commonplace long

before the pandemic because of toxic smog that regularly shuts down roads, schools and commerce because of public health risks.

I often joke that of all the technology the Chinese steal from us, it would be nice if they would sneak a peek at our pollution control systems. We're leading the world in environmental quality because of our commitment to preserving our natural resources and ecosystems along with our recognition that the free market is the best tool to balance environmental protection with economic growth.

Contrary to the narrative that our environment is getting worse — and that human existence and energy development are to blame for it — America's success shows that prosperity and environmental quality actually go hand in hand. They are allies, not enemies.

The best long-term solution for our environment is to promote freedom and economic growth.

2. Climate science shows warming will remain mild and manageable.

But, you might ask, what about climate change? Clean air is one thing, but visions of burning forests, rising sea levels and raging hurricanes conjured by hysterical headlines are understandably concerning.

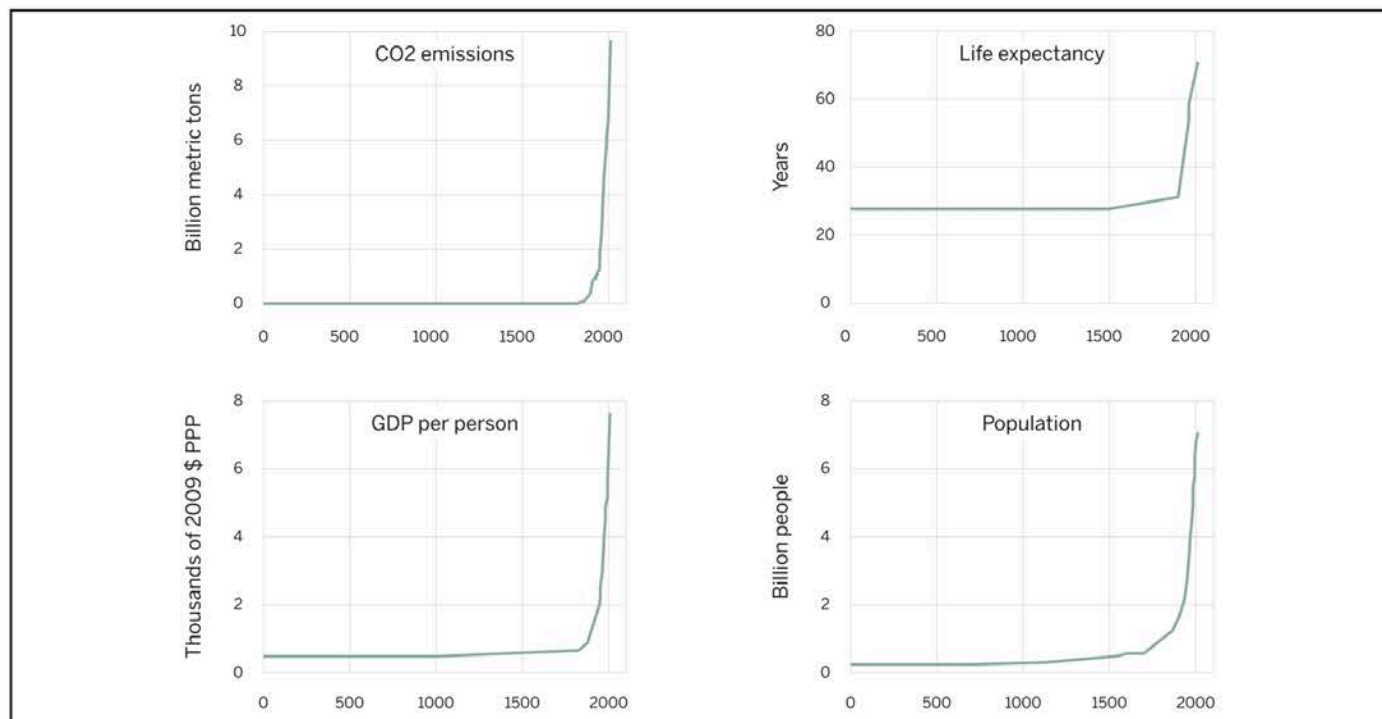
There's more good news here. The media's reports on climate change, which heavily influence the public's outlook,

are oversimplified to such an extent that they actually directly contradict climate science. One Obama energy adviser described our culture's perception of climate change as "drifting so far out of touch with the actual science as to be absurdly, demonstrably false."

Since the 1970s, environmentalist activists have been claiming we only have a few years left to stave off the apocalypse. Yet we're still here. Why?

Time for a quick science lesson. The stark headlines we see about our supposedly impending doom are based on statistical data models, usually the Model for the Assessment of Greenhouse Gas Induced Climate Change, or MAGICC, which is used by leading organizations including the United Nations and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The problem with these models is twofold. First, they're built using outdated and unrealistic conditions, such as near-total global reliance on coal. Since the models were designed, coal consumption has plummeted, replaced largely by natural gas. There's no sign of this trend coming to an end any time soon (and even if it did, advanced pollution and emission control technologies would be used), making these projections highly suspect. Simply put, the models are "garbage in, garbage out."

Second, data models aren't meant for predicting the future at all. Instead, they're designed to provide a wide range of possible outcomes. One scientist described them



as “wrong but useful.” Just as faulty COVID-19 models led to mass panic and lockdowns, climate models are unfortunately instilling hysteria that’s penetrated our governments and boardrooms.

Most of the fear-inducing climate headlines we see are based on the most extreme MAGICC scenario — of course, the one most likely to get clicks and viral views — not the more reasonable, so-called “business-as-usual” projection. But even that projection has overshot historical warming every single time.

New studies cataloging 420,000 years of historical geological and weather data suggest that manmade greenhouse gas emissions are simply not strong enough to affect global temperatures. The earth is currently in an “interglacial period,” which is a normal period of warmer than usual temperatures spanning 10,000-15,000 years. As it turns out, we don’t actually live in unprecedented times. And after the events of the last few years, that’s a relief to hear.

A frank review of climate science shows that warming is likely to remain mild and manageable while human resiliency continues to improve.

Meanwhile, you and I are 99% less likely to die in a climate-related weather event than our great-grandparents were. Interestingly, resiliency to these natural disasters is improving at a much faster rate than to nonclimate-related natural disasters like earthquakes and volcanoes. It’s clear the weather isn’t the culprit here.

3. Affordable, reliable energy has saved humanity.

Activists of a certain political bent often deride middle- and upper-class Americans as “privileged.” They’re not wrong, frankly. In the hustle and bustle of our comfortably electrified lives, we forget just how different our day-to-day existence is from those who don’t enjoy the blessing of affordable, reliable energy. A dead smartphone battery, empty gas tank or brief power outage might wreck our day, but there are billions of men, women and children around the world without electricity who couldn’t fathom the luxuries we take for granted every day.

It’s no coincidence that since the Industrial Revolution, when the use of fossil fuels became commonplace because of their unparalleled efficiency, quality of life around the world has skyrocketed.

Life expectancy has more than doubled in the last 200 years while poverty, infant mortality, hunger and child labor have plummeted. Every measurement we can use to judge the quality of human life, from literacy to gender equality to economic freedom, has improved dramatically — and it’s nearly all thanks to expanding access to affordable, reliable energy.

After all, energy makes everything about modern life possible, from the alarm clock that wakes us from slumber and the stove that cooks our breakfast to the vehicle we drive and the computer we use at work. Even the most basic necessities — safe sanitation systems, clean drinking water, warm homes in wintertime, lifesaving medications, access to nutritious food, emergency communications and online banking — would be impossible without a constant flow of reliable and cost-effective electricity.

The energy industry makes possible every societal structure we depend on. It’s time we stop apologizing for it.

Even in the 21st century, nearly a billion people around the world have no electricity at all. Still billions more have only sporadic power, so little as to be nearly futile. Their lives are bleak and difficult compared with even those in dire poverty in America.

In South Sudan, where just 7% have access to electricity, those lucky enough to survive childhood wouldn’t expect to live past 55. Medieval diseases like cholera and dysentery are commonplace, and barely a third of adults are literate. There are many problems facing the South Sudanese people, but the basic infrastructure of electricity to improve health and safety, better educational options and expand economic opportunity would go a long way to solving everything else.

If we think we’ve simply advanced past the developing world, we should think again. Weeklong blackouts in Venezuela a few years ago drove people to scavenge for food from trash cans and pay nearly a month’s salary for black market bottled water. One woman described it as a “return to the Middle Ages.” And during the now infamous “Snowid” winter storm that knocked out power across Texas in 2021, an 11-year-old boy froze to death in his bed. Energy is the best protector we have against poverty, disease and danger.

I’m proud to represent the energy resources that have made both human lives and the environment richer than ever. I hope you’ll join me in changing the narrative on energy and climate change. Our colleagues, our customers and the world deserve better. 💧



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Honorable Jason Isaac is founder and CEO of the American Energy Institute, a senior fellow with Life:Powered at the Texas Public Policy Foundation and a proponent of a high carbon lifestyle. He previously served four terms in the Texas House of Representatives.