Coming together on climate change
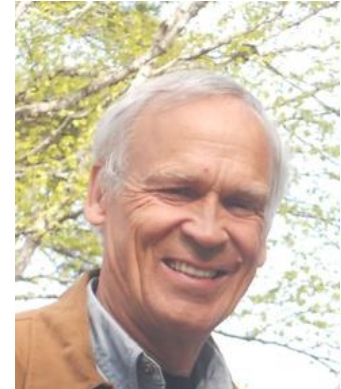Bill Bussey
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The issue of climate change has certainly been a divisive one. While most folks probably agree that the climate is changing, there are strongly-held differing opinions on the extent to which humans contribute to it; what its impacts will be; and whether anything can be done about it. Though a great many climate scientists have concluded that it poses very serious risks, there are others who have concluded otherwise, and no one can say for certain what the outcome will be.

But the very fact that the outcome is uncertain means that all us, like it or not, are faced with the risk that the large majority of climate scientists may be right, and if so, failing to take action now could result in very serious consequences down the road.

It's a risk that Congress failed to address in 2009 when Democrats were in control, so what are the odds that our current Republican-controlled Congress will address it? Very long, I suspect most folks would say. But there is a way of beating those odds. That's by all of us—across America and across the political spectrum—letting our members of Congress know that ignoring the risk any longer is just, too risky.

Of course, given the current make-up of Congress, Republican voices are critically important, and it is encouraging to note that a number of prominent Republicans have recently spoken out on the issue:

In a recent op-ed in the Wall Street Journal proposing "A Conservative Answer to Climate Change," former Republican Secretaries of State James Baker and George Shultz wrote that "the extent to which climate change is due to man-made causes can be questioned. But the risks associated with future warming are so severe that they should be hedged." (The proposal calls for a tax on fossil fuels; distribution of all proceeds to American households; and a border adjustment for imports and exports to level the global economic playing field.)

Making the same case in a New York Times op-ed, economists Martin Feldstein and Gregory Mankiw, Chairmen of President Reagan's and President George W. Bush's Councils of Economic Advisors, proclaimed: "Crazy as it may sound, this is the perfect time to enact a sensible policy to address the dangerous threat of climate change. Before you call us nuts, hear us out."

At his confirmation hearing, our current Secretary of State and former Exxon-Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson testified that "the risk of climate change does exist, and that the consequences could be serious enough that action should be taken." (He also supports a revenue-neutral carbon tax.)

Earlier this month 17 Republican members of Congress introduced a resolution committing the House of Representatives "to create and support economically viable, and broadly supported private and public solutions to study and address the causes and effects of measured changes to our global and regional climates," and 28 members of the House—14 Democrats and 14 Republicans—have joined the bi-partisan Climate Solutions Caucus to "educate members on economically-viable options to reduce

climate risk and protect our nation's economy, security, infrastructure, agriculture, water supply and public safety."

The latest Gallup poll found that two-thirds of Americans worry "a great deal" or "a fair amount" about climate change, and a recent report from the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication indicates that more than six in ten of those who voted for President Trump "support taxing and/or regulating the pollution that causes global warming."

So maybe this is the perfect time for getting Congress to act. If you agree that we at least owe it to our kids and grandkids to give it our best shot, then contact Senators Johnson and Baldwin and Representative Duffy and let them know. If you're a business owner, elected official, or other community leader, get in touch with me to sign on to a joint letter urging them to take action. Call me nuts, but I think that together we can do this.

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