

CLIMATE TALK

Three Northland College Students Weigh in on the National Election: What Does This Mean for Climate Change?

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When did science become so politicized? Ninety seven percent of our scientists agree that climate change is real, caused by humans, and is a threat to our nation as well as our world. Yet in our government, the words climate change seem to be grounds for verbal war.

This idea was very apparent in the 2016 election. One presidential candidate believed in climate change, while the other did not. Now that the latter has won, for many climate change believers it feels like a time to despair. The time for action for many cannot come soon enough, and many students at Northland fear we cannot have four years of inaction on climate change.

But Americans tend to forget Presidents pasts, whether that be George W. Bush's two terms within the last two decades or all the way back to John Adam's presidency in the early 19th century. Administration accomplishments aside, John Adams refused to display party loyalty and often lacked decorum, perceived by many equals as volatile, obnoxious, fiery in temper, and even "totally insane." Andrew Jackson displayed a similar temperament, resorting to petty and vindictive acts, despite his notoriety as a war-hero and overall successful President. Lyndon B. Johnson consistently peppered his speech with expletives and George W. Bush continually invented words to richen the English lexicon.

George W. Bush also served during a time of immense fear, distrust, and pervasive prejudice following the 9/11 attacks. Party politics were just as divisive and corporate cronyism within his cabinet and federal agencies was rampant. Citizens United v. FEC opened the floodgates for most entities to further sway the election cycle through campaign spending. The Bush administration also refused to sign the Kyoto Accord, shaped a "do-nothing" policy based on input from Exxon, Global Climate Coalition, and other big industry interests, discredited empirical evidence on the validity of climate change, and casting doubt on the issue by misleading the public.

In summary, this is not the first time we have had an election with fiery candidates who have divided our nation. In these times of urgency, it is wise to remember what government is for: to represent us and serve us as citizens of the United States. No matter who is in office, we must hold them accountable to preserve our great nation, and to continue the tradition of American ingenuity. Furthermore, we must remember that the overwhelming majority of people representing us in our government at all levels are doing so because they wish to and believe they can make change that is good for our country. Whether you believe the change they seek is good or not, we must try to focus on the fact that the government is just made up of people fighting for their version of good, and that is a wonderful thing. Whenever you feel your voice is not being heard, remember that you are not speaking to an abstract institution but to human beings. You must believe that they will hear and they will listen if only you shout loudly enough.

How you become engaged with climate change must be your own choice. Some may choose grassroots organizations like Citizen's Climate Lobby, a non-partisan, non-profit group committed to putting a price on carbon. Some may become inspired by writing to the newspaper, as we have chosen to do. Others may attend workshops, get educated, teach, or run for office themselves. All of these pathways are valid

ways to combat climate change. If we work to make our voices heard in all aspects of our government, from grassroots organizations, state level, and national, we can work in the great American tradition to be inventive and find new ways to create a green and sustainable future for all Americans.

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