



Dan notes, in a [recent post](#), the ways in which potential Republican presidential candidates are backwards-pedaling on whatever statements they might once have made supporting action to address climate change. (Climate change is apparently the new former mistriss — we’ve all flirted in the past with things we now regret.) Former Congressman Bob Inglis (R-S.C.) spoke at UCLA Law earlier this week and shed some light on the current Republican allergy to climate action.

Inglis had been in office for 6 terms and was the ranking Republican member on the House Energy & Environment Subcommittee when he lost his seat to a Tea Party-backed challenger in the 2010 Republican primary. He left Congress in January of this year, but not before memorably lambasting his fellow Republicans on the House floor for their stance on climate change (video and transcript [here](#)). In a post-election interview, he told NPR that his views on climate change were his “most enduring problem” in the campaign. His crimes were acknowledging human-induced warming and backing a (revenue-neutral) carbon tax to address it.

At UCLA Inglis explained why, in his view, it is fundamentally conservative to want to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and why Republicans have lost their way in embracing “drill baby drill,” rather than wise stewardship, as their core energy philosophy. He also gave four reasons for what he calls the current populist rejection of science. Few people have likely given this subject more thought or been better placed to understand it (he showed a harrowing video of his angry constituents at a town hall, even scarier in a post-Giffords world), so his views deserve attention. He suggests that:

(1) Rejecting the science is a coping mechanism for dealing with a threat that is otherwise too big to handle

- (2) Rejecting the science gives people cover for not wanting to change in the ways that climate change would demand
- (3) Al Gore has claimed the “exclusive franchise” on climate change, and if he’s for it, Republicans have to be against it
- (4) Because the science is complex and difficult, it’s an easy target for TV and radio hosts hoping to further their careers by sowing politically-relevant confusion

Of these, climate action advocates seem potentially able to influence all four, albeit with difficulty. They could (and do):

- (1) Make the threat seem less threatening by emphasizing potential solutions in the same breath as the problem
- (2) Make the steps one would take to address climate change seem less daunting by underscoring their upsides
- (3) Try to divorce the call for action on climate change from any one party or spokesperson
- (4) Work for better ways to communicate about climate science

Despite this, Inglis’s four still seem to be beating the hell out of the advocates’ four. Other theories/responses/ideas?