

Is Republican climate denial starting to crack? The GOP's official position has long been that climate change isn't happening, or if it is, it's not caused by humans, and anyway it's not that serious and there's nothing to be done about. Three events last week may be signs that this position is starting to weaken.

The first event involved the Pentagon, perhaps the part of the government with the strongest support among Republicans. Last year, the Republican-controlled Congress directed the Pentagon to report on the military's vulnerability. The military has been a reliable GOP stronghold, with service members favoring Trump over Clinton by a two-to-one margin. But the Pentagon's report issued last Friday didn't follow the Trump Administration line on climate change. Indeed, the report painted a dire picture of climate impacts: "The 22-page assessment delivered to Congress on Jan. 17 says about two-thirds of 79 mission-essential military installations in the U.S. that were reviewed are vulnerable to current or future flooding, with more than half vulnerable to current or future drought. About half also are at risk from wildfires, including the threat of mudslides and erosion from rains following the blazes." ([Bloomberg](#), 1/18/2019). That's not going to reassure members of the Armed Services Committees.

A day earlier, in conservative Idaho, which Trump carried by over twenty points, the Republican Governor spoke out about climate change. Here's what he had to say: "Climate is changing, there's no question about it," he said. "Sometimes what you do from a regulatory standpoint might be counter to what the right thing to do is, but you've got to recognize it. It's here. We've just got to figure out how we're going to cope with it. And we've got to slow it down. Now, reversing it is going to be a big darn job." ([Idaho Statesman](#), 1/16/2018).

Also last week, the heads of forty-one college College Republican chapters joined in a [letter](#) that "wholeheartedly call[ed] on our fellow College Republicans to support conservative action on clean energy and environmental issues." Referring to the Republican party's need to attract millennial voters, they said that "[a]s leaders, both on campus and in our states, we firmly believe that environmental stewardship is important, deserves our attention, and should employ a market-centric solution."

As I noted in a December 2018 [post](#), the views of rank-and-file Republicans may already be shifting. Two-thirds of Republicans now believe the world's climate is undergoing a change that is causing more extreme weather patterns and sea level rise. The College Republican leaders were right about their generation: a [survey](#) by Pew found that "[a]bout a third (36%) of Millennials in the GOP say the Earth is warming mostly due to human activity, double the share of Republicans in the Baby Boomer or older generations."

It's far too early to know whether GOP views are finally starting to shift in the face of reality. But there's reason not to give up hope.