Last night's Presidential debate was the first in many years to feature an announced climate section. Having sat with the questions and answers for a bit, here are my top 5 takeaways.

5) The discussion came really late in the game, saved till the last few minutes of the final debate between these candidates. Before moderator Kristen Welker transitioned to the issue, the climate Twitterverse began losing hope that any debate time at all would be saved for the promised climate focus. Intentionally or not, this is a fitting metaphor for how society has dealt with this issue (or failed to deal with it): squeezed in at the last possible moment, and only after other issues and divorced from them, rather than integrated into multidimensional conversations and solutions. That said, the questions Welker asked were terrific. Her first question presumed that climate change is a problem and asked about solutions, and her second focused like a laser on fenceline communities suffering from Trump's regulatory rollbacks. Both of these questions better reflect reality than did Wallace's outdated, "do you believe it's real" approach.

4) The tiny windows! Trump remains oddly obsessed with questions of size. His unfounded, multiple references to the "little, tiny, small windows" that Biden and his cohort would force Americans to adopt (presumably as part of efforts to improve building energy efficiency) were simply bizarre. Others have done a good job [documenting Trump's fixation on this topic and speculating about where Trump got this particular talking point](#), but what strikes me is how it advances fearmongering about environmentalists reducing quality of life.   Big windows=luxury in Trump's NYC-builder universe, and this talking point reinforces decades of misinformation about enviros as ascetics.

3) The "fumes!" Trump has no idea how to talk about pollution. He tried to malign wind turbines ("windmills") by talking about, I think, the pollution embedded in their manufacture–but wound up evoking Pepe-Le-Pew-type images of fumes rising from turbines as from a pack of skunks. This was the debate's funniest moment, for me.

2) Biden gets lost in the numbers and it hurts his message. His [climate plan](#) is strong, and its fundamentals (strong targets, public investment, enforceable standards, just transition, jobs) [poll really well](#). No one in this debate audience particularly needs to know whether it commits to 50,000 or 5,000 or 500,000 EV charging stations, and Biden tripping over those and other numbers seems like an unforced error.

1) Biden's empathy is his strength, and he did especially well on the EJ question. He drew on his childhood growing up near oil refineries and talked about fenceline communities, cancer risks, and the importance of keeping people healthy. He shrugged off Trump as not even having understood the question, which I think is right (Trump reverted to assertions

about how much money these families are making–"they're making more money than they've ever made"–and said nothing about pollution or risks to health and safety. Pretty on brand.)   Environmental messaging is at its strongest when it centers people, so if Biden leans into these areas where his strengths amplify the movement's strengths, he could wind up being a very effective climate messenger.