

Not all days are set aside for happy reasons. Think of Memorial Day, dedicated to the nation's war dead. Like the toll of war, climate change isn't something to celebrate, but it's something to remember. We can also commemorate the role of scientists and engineers in identifying climate change, its cause, and the technologies needed to address it.

Picking a date to highlight climate change isn't easy, given that climate change happens year-round. There's a good argument, however, in favor of August 23. It was on August 23, 1856, that Eunice Foote's pathbreaking paper about warming effect of carbon dioxide was [presented](#) to the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Her experiments proved the reality of what we now call the greenhouse effect. She made the link between CO₂ and climate, saying that "an atmosphere of that gas would give to our earth a high temperature; and if as some suppose, at one period of its history the air had mixed with it a larger proportion than at present, an increased temperature. . . must have necessarily resulted."

August 23 has several advantages as the date for contemplating climate change. First, it provides an opportunity to honor Foote, one of the earliest women in American science and a pioneering women's rights advocate. I've [posted](#) about her accomplishments previously, and it would be great to give her some long overdue recognition. The fact that her discovery was more than a century and a half ago also provides a clue to just how deeply grounded climate science is.

Second, because late August closes out the summer, it is a perfect time to think about global warming. Future summers will be even hotter and more devastating. Along the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts, it's also around the peak of hurricane season, a good time to think about climate disruption., while in the West it's peak fire season. So it's a good time for people to be thinking about climate change.

Creating National Climate Awareness Day would send a message about the importance of climate change. It would also provide an occasion to educate Americans about the issue. If it can also celebrate modern science, and the contributions of women to science, all the better. And all it would take is a Presidential proclamation.