

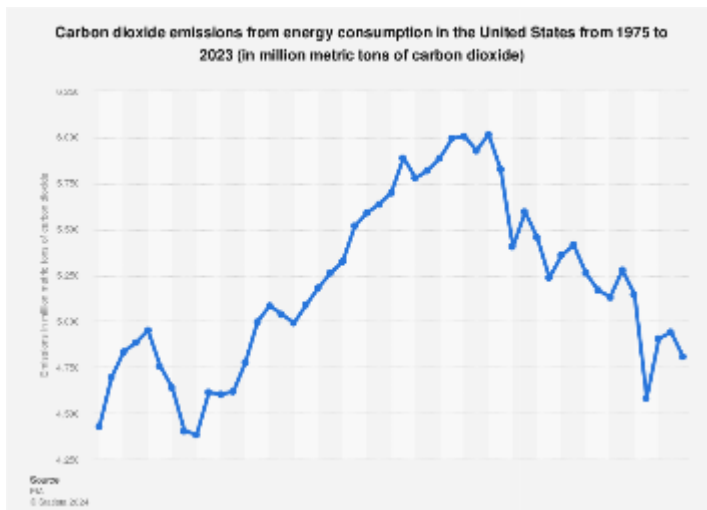


Willis C. Hawley (left) and Reed Smoot: Climate Warriors?

So Donald Trump has imposed massive tariffs on Canada and Mexico, and then paused them, and then imposed them again, and then paused them — as always, he is the master of political coitus interruptus. But Canada has not backed off and is maintaining its current retaliatory tariffs: Trump has already promised more and is still moving ahead with steel and aluminum tariffs. [Already the markets are beginning to panic,](#)

So, for those who care about the planet, the response should be.... hope??!!

Yes. Those who care about climate should welcome these tariffs, for two major reasons:



First, take a look at the graph of US carbon emissions. They have been declining since 2006, but not fast enough. In only one year did they really drop precipitously: 2020, when COVID hit and the economy collapsed. In other words, one of the quickest and most effective ways to get emissions down is through a recession.

And the sorts of tariffs Trump is applying have a very good chance to do that, [according to Mark Zandi of Moody's Analytics](#), the economy is already “gagging” on the Trump’s economic chaos. Tariffs will help it choke, as did the Smoot-Hawley Tariff of 1930.

Now, causing a recession is about the least efficient and most harmful way to reduce emissions. I get that. Under Trump, however, that is the *only* climate policy measure available with any chance at emissions reduction. So, we should welcome it.

[But wait! There’s more!](#)

To the extent that they tank the economy, tariffs are very bad news for Republicans, who right now have a razor-thin margin in the House. Whatever else one might say about the current partisan divide, Democrats are *much* better on climate than Republicans. If they retake the House - or even retake the Senate (which will be considerably harder), they will use this authority not only to investigate and harass anti-climate policy in the administration, but also will insist on pro-climate appropriations.

These are very bad times. But it makes sense to look for silver linings where we can get them.

So, with regard to tariffs, in the words of the great climate scientist Lt. Harry Callahan, Go Ahead: Make My Day.



Not Your Typical Climate Scientist