President Obama's State of the Union address had good news for research universities and for renewable energy:

> We'll invest in biomedical research, information technology, and especially clean energy technology – an investment that will strengthen our security, protect our planet, and create countless new jobs for our people. Already, we are seeing the promise of renewable energy. In terms of renewable energy, he added: "I challenge you to join me in setting a new goal: by 2035, 80% of America's electricity will come from clean energy sources."

The President also came out strongly in favor of high-speed rail.

What about regulation more generally? On the whole, the message should have reassuring to environmentalists:

> When we find rules that put an unnecessary burden on businesses, we will fix them. But I will not hesitate to create or enforce commonsense safeguards to protect the American people. That's what we've done in this country for more than a century. It's why our food is safe to eat, our water is safe to drink, and our air is safe to breathe.

All well and good. But when it came to biggest environmental issue of our time, the President was completely silent. Not a word about climate change.

Obviously, the calculation was that the best approach was to ignore climate change and focus on clean energy as a goal. I wouldn't quarrel with the President's judgment about the political situation. But it's a bit disappointing when a Democratic president is afraid to be as forthright as the outgoing Republican governor of California on a critical environmental issue.