



The Republican Candidates (NY Times photo)

Michele Bachmann ripped into Tim Pawlenty last night for his past support of cap-and-trade. “When you were governor of Minnesota, you implemented cap and trade in our state.... you said the era of small government was over. That sounds a lot more like Barack Obama if you ask me.”

Several of the other candidates have backed away from their previous support for cap-and-trade measures as governors. It remains fascinating that this mainstream economic concept, long controversial among environmentalists, is now anathema to Republicans.

On the other hand, [E&E](#) reports, renewable energy is a more popular concept:

Obama’s Republican challengers will also have an opportunity to promote clean energy. Iowa has more wind power capacity than every state but Texas, and it provides about 20 percent of the state’s electricity, according to the American Wind Energy Association.

All of the candidates are expected to sign a wind blade measuring 130 feet long that was built in Iowa by TPI Composites, Inc., says AWEA. The group credits the state’s renewable energy portfolio and other pro-wind policies for generating clean energy investments amounting to about \$5 billion in Iowa.

It’s interesting how the issues of climate change and renewable energy have become separated in the minds of the public.

This is one reason that it seems shrewd for Obama to stress green jobs as an issue. But more importantly, as one Romney consultant put it, what Americans “care about most is the

big picture — jobs and the economy. Obviously environment and energy and innovations are important. But they're only important as they play into the bigger picture." To the extent Obama can tie renewable energy to the job picture, he may be able to tap into this powerful public concern.

I'll be taking a look at the Republican candidate's positions on energy issues and posting on that soon. Stay tuned.