Enemy Of The Planet

[For Dan, Labor Day means thinking about Labor](#). For me, it means thinking about the [horrific traffic that Cape Cod summer residents face on their way back to wherever](#). Or rather, it means thinking about the ridiculous mode of transportation the some friends of mine used to avoid that traffic.

My friends work for a fancy hedge fund in New Jersey. So how did they get to the Cape for their vacation? By private jet — what else?

As I told one of them, "As your friend, I'm delighted. As someone who cares about the future of the planet, I'm appalled."

[Air traffic produces massive amounts of carbon emissions](#) — something that climate deniers gleefully point out when discussing international climate conferences that require global participation, and something that [has caused a brewing conflict between the United States and the European Union](#) (about which the United States is wrong, by the way). But we can't be in the business of foregoing air travel, can we?

Well, some of us can. As convenient as it might be, private jets seem to be a particularly egregious waste of global atmospheric resources — particularly private jets flying from New Jersey to the Cape. One could, of course, say that that's the point of a carbon tax. But carbon taxes will never pass.

So what should the law say? Here's a modest proposal:

> All private jets must either purchase complete carbon offsets or pay a tax in lieu of purchasing offsets.

Let's see the Republicans fight *that* one. Note that even if you didn't call it a tax, this would be precisely the form of regulation upheld by the Supreme Court in the health care cases.

In the heaven of legal concepts, this might not be the most theoretically efficient way to regulate carbon emissions. But since the Republican Party has decided to block any more efficient alternatives, advocates for stronger climate policy need to find particularly ripe political targets for regulation. Private jets would seem to be one of them.