

“But except for that, how did you like the play, Mrs. Lincoln?” It’s an old joke, for all I know going back to 1865. That was 2016, too, in a way. Like Mrs. Lincoln’s evening at Ford’s Theater, 2016 contained a lot of good things, some bad things, and then disaster. Here’s a list of each.

The Good

1. **The Paris Agreement.** The Paris Agreement, negotiated at the end of last year, went into force on November 4. Before that could happen, the Agreement had to be ratified by at least 55 countries accounting in total for at least an estimated 55 % of total global greenhouse gas emissions. That was accomplished on October 4.
2. **Aviation Emissions.** After much fussing and foot-dragging, we now have a global agreement on emissions from airplanes. At a meeting in Montreal, the 191-nation International Civil Aviation Organization reached agreement on October 6 to deal with the rapidly growing problem of aviation emissions peak.
3. **HFC Limitations.** On October 14, an international conference in Rwanda reached agreement to extend the Montreal Protocol to a new group of chemicals, chlorofluorocarbons (HFCs). HFCs are ultra-strong greenhouse gases. Industry is starting to move toward more climate-friendly coolants, and the new agreement will sharply accelerate the move.
4. **CO₂ Emission Trends.** The U.S. Energy Information Administration reported on October 4 that CO₂ emissions from U.S. energy use were the lowest in 25 years during the first six months of 2016. GDP and employment have been growing, but carbon is going the opposite direction.
5. **California Climate Legislation.** In another step forward for climate policy, SB 32 was enacted in California. It requires that emissions be slashed 40% below 1990 levels by 2030.
6. **Methane Emissions.** On May 12, EPA issued its first regulation limiting methane emissions from the oil and gas industry.
7. **Toxic Chemical Regulation.** Overcoming years of deadlock, Congress passed the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act, breathing new life into the Toxic Substances Control Act. On the negative side, the act also limits state regulation of toxic chemicals, though less than state regulators had feared.
8. **Marine Reserves.** In August, Obama quadrupled the size of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, to half a million square miles of land and sea in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. In December, he created the 38,000 square mile Frank R. Lautenberg Deep-Sea Coral Protection Area, the largest U.S. reserve established so far in the Atlantic.

The Bad

1. **Supreme Court Stay.** On February 9, in an unprecedented action, the Supreme Court stayed the Obama Administration's Clean Power Plan pending review.
2. **Washington Carbon Tax.** Washington voters rejected a carbon tax. The proposal had been attacked both by conservatives and environmental justice advocates.
3. **California Legislation.** Due to a similar push by environmental justice advocates, California passed a law requiring the state to "prioritize" direct restrictions on polluters, which could have the effect of undermining the state's cap-and-trade program. The impact of the law remains unclear.
4. **Congressional Elections.** Contrary to earlier hopes, the Republicans maintained control of the Senate and lost only a few seats in the House. Their leaders in both chambers remain dedicated to dismantling environmental protections.

... And the Ugly

1. **The Presidential Election.** Donald Trump, who once called climate science a Chinese hoax, was elected President.
2. **EPA Nominee.** Trump nominated Scott Pruitt. Pruitt, an oil industry ally, litigated against EPA's climate change regulations when he was Oklahoma Attorney General.
3. **Nominating Fossil Fuel Advocates.** The other Trump nominees — Rick Perry at DOE, Rex Tillerson at State, Ryan Zinke at Interior — are not quite so lacking in redeeming features as Pruitt on an individual basis. Collectively, however, Trump's team is composed of individuals who have spent their careers fighting for greater use of fossil fuels, and against pollution and climate change regulations. Taken together, they're a fossil fuel dream team.
4. **Trump ♥ Putin.** Trump's close, symbiotic relationship with Putin is a problem in many other dimensions, but it further cements the fossil fuel alliance. Russia is basically a petro-state these days, like Saudi Arabia, whose economy depends on exporting fossil fuels. The fact that Trump views Russia as our best friend further cements his pro-fossil fuel attitude.