

Today's confirmation hearing of Rex Tillerson, Trump's nominee for Secretary of State, has concluded. During the day, there were two impassioned exchanges about climate change, during which Tillerson revealed how naive environmentalists were that he might be able to sway Trump on the issue.

First, [Senator Tim Kaine \(our almost-VP\) excoriated Tillerson on ExxonMobil's record](#) of publicly denying the science of climate change despite their internal scientists affirming the causal connection between fossil fuels and climate change. When pressed about the veracity of these allegations, Tillerson refused to answer. Sen. Kaine asked him to clarify that he was divesting all of his financial interest in the company, and was under no confidentiality agreement, which Tillerson confirmed. Yet Tillerson still refused to discuss Exxon's history of climate science denial. Essentially, Kaine made Tillerson enunciate his formal objectivity while admitting his in-practice loyalty to the oil company.

Second, [Senator Tom Udall questioned Tillerson](#) about his personal views of climate change science and the Paris deal. Tillerson provided general responses about the "facts on the ground" of climate change, while also hedging on whether human activity is the cause, saying there are "some" scientists that say it is, and "some" that disagree, as if the numbers were at all comparable. When Udall pointed this out, Tillerson merely repeated himself. On the Paris deal, Tillerson repeatedly limited his answers to saying he thought the U.S. should "have a seat at the table" and that there must be a global effort. Again, when Udall pointed out the emptiness of those statements, saying that a person can be sitting at a table and still be completely silent, and that the argument about global efforts are now moot, since the U.S. is the only major global power even wavering on the issue, Tillerson once again simply repeated his prepared remarks.

If environmentalists were pinning their hopes on Tillerson to move Trump toward the position on climate change held by 97% of the world, they have been sorely disappointed.