We are now, as so often, in a time of divided government. That makes bipartisan cooperation necessary. We are also in a time of hyper-partisanship. The problem may be compounded by the concessions made by McCarthy to the far Right in order to become Speaker. Nevertheless, there may be some opportunities for cooperation across party lines on climate issues. Given the urgency for climate action, we cannot afford to neglect those opportunities.

It's easy — and not entirely wrong — to dismiss current Republican moves away from climate denial as far too little and far too late. I think that would be a mistake. But that overlooks an important benefit of the shift. There is far too much irrationality and outright craziness in the political world. We can only benefit as a society if the debate shifts from *whether* to address climate change to *how* to do so.

Admittedly, important parts of the Republican party remain mired in denialism. But there are a significant number of congressional Republicans who acknowledge the need for action of some kind. The Conservative Climate Caucus had 48 members last year. It seems mostly focused on support for energy innovation as a way of cutting emissions. There are also bipartisan Climate Solutions caucuses in the House and the Senate. The Senate caucus seems more active. It seems mostly interested in nature-based solutions and in climate adaptation, though members did support the Kigali Amendment to eliminate super-warming chemicals (HFCs).

Outside of Congress itself are some increasingly influential organizations backing the efforts of these caucuses. According to E&E News, organizations like ClearPath and Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions (CRES) "have spent millions on lobbying efforts and have consistently gotten an audience with lawmakers to make the case for the 'energy innovation' agenda." Besides frequent appearances for Republicans at hearings, they have "helped prod Republicans on climate change, moving the party away from outright denialism" and toward "many of the groups' energy policy talking points."

ClearPath's mission statement gives a sense of these organizations' stance:

"ClearPath's mission is to develop and advance policies that accelerate breakthrough innovations that reduce emissions in the energy and industrial sectors. . .. ClearPath (501(c)(3)) collaborates with public and private sector stakeholders on innovations in nuclear energy, carbon capture, hydropower, natural gas, geothermal, energy storage, and heavy industry to enable private-sector deployment of critical technologies.

ClearPath points to the 2021 Infrastructure law as an example of the kind of measures that it supports.

CRES, the other major organization, endorses the premise that the "U.S. has an economic and moral imperative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for the benefit of future generations." It describes its mission as engaging Republican policymakers and the public regarding "responsible, conservative solutions to address our nation's energy, economic, and environmental security while increasing America's competitive edge."

The policies espoused by these groups and their congressional supporters are limited in their vision and commitment. Nonetheless, they do suggest some possible areas for bipartisan cooperation.

One such area is defending many of the measures passed in the last Congress from attack by the Freedom Caucus and its allies. Many of the provisions of the Infrastructure law, the CHIPS Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act are designed to encourage the development and deployment of the kinds of innovative technologies that CRES and ClearPath endorse. Bipartisan support also seems to exist for expanding energy R&D. Even during the period of unified government under Trump, congressional Republicans staunchly defended DOE's clean tech innovation program, ARPA-E, against assaults from Trump himself. Increased funding of this and similar programs would be welcome. There is no indication that we are anywhere near the point of diminishing returns for such efforts.

Permitting reform is a touchy area but one where some room for bipartisan action may exist. It seems to be a priority issue for CRES, but many environmentalists also recognize the need to speed up and simplify project approvals. Some potential remedies involve changes in substantive laws and community input, such as weakening environmental impact statements. Democrats will not support those changes. But some procedural remedies may be more acceptable.

Other possible areas of agreement avoid hot button issues about regulating fossil fuels. On the mitigation side, they include control of non-CO_2 greenhouse gases, nature-based solutions to improve carbon reservoirs, technologies like geothermal and advanced hydro, and reduction of agricultural emissions. Although the issue divides Democrats, some collaboration on advanced nuclear technologies might also be a possibility. Adaptation is another area where agreement may be possible.

I don’t want to oversell the potential for bipartisan cooperation. Republicans are further from endorsing the kinds of broad climate policies we need than they were fifteen years ago when John McCain was their nominee for president. But we cannot afford to allow even small possible victories to slip from our hands.