

Congressmember Andy Ogles of Tennessee is a zit on the face of American politics: a white nationalist and Islamophobe who started out as a flunkie for the Koch Brothers and lied about his credentials when he first ran for Congress. Unsurprisingly, he is also a climate denier, (in)famously stating during a 2024 House debate on an Interior-Environment spending bill that “You know, we may have had a hot summer, but I just went trick or treating with my kids and it was like, you know, the low that evening was 29 degrees, so temperatures change, alright? Temperatures have been changing for the millennia.”

And this coming January, he will be a *former* Congressmember. Last week, he got beaten soundly in Tennessee’s 5th District Republican primary by former Tennessee Agricultural Commissioner Charlie Hatcher. (Did I even have to mention that *of course* Ogles is a Republican?). One big reason for this is that the Volunteer State’s legislature took up the Supreme Court’s invitation to gerrymander away Black districts under the guise of “partisanship,” and that meant that a large chunk of the new 5th District had no relation to the old one.

But there was another big reason: the “Invest in Tomorrow Coalition PAC,” which spent nearly $2 million dollars against Ogles. Ogles boasted about helping to kill the clean energy credits in the Inflation Reduction Act through the “One Big Beautiful Bill.” There were a lot of reasons why Ogles lost: ITC PAC was one of them.

ITC PAC is funded almost exclusively by Silicon Valley multibillionaire investor Chris Larsen, but is run by among others former Sierra Club executive director Michael

Brune. It appears to have an interesting and relative new model: intervene in GOP primaries against egregious climate deniers, on behalf of the clean energy industry. ITC also helped to defeat climate denier Chip Roy in his primary campaign for Texas Attorney General. “Good riddance Chip Roy,” read a projection on the wall of the U.S. Department of Energy Building in Washington after the votes in Texas were counted. “DontMessWithSolar.com.”

None of ITC’s ads are about renewables: most independent expenditure PACs do not concern the PAC’s core issues. But the play here is simply to tell Congressmembers that taking anti-renewable energy positions will generate well-funded primary challenges. Climate denial is already atrocious policy: the goal is to make it clear that it is bad politics, too. It is particularly interesting because it is not as if Hatcher (Ogles’ opponent) took a **pro-**renewable line; ITC just wanted to punish Ogles. And it did.


Rep, Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA)

It isn’t just about punishing. ITC spent $125,000 in favor of Iowa Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks, who fought (successfully) to keep clean energy credits in OBBB. Miller-Meeks successfully fought off a primary challenge this past June.

But that raises a crucial question: what happens in November? Miller-Meeks represents a swing district. In 2020, she won election to Congress by ***six*** votes (that’s right: six). She has a vigorous, strong opponent in Christina Bohannon (who is a professor at the University of Iowa College of Law). There is a very good chance

that this district could flip Red to Blue. And Miller-Meeks is no environmentalist: she is a reliable Trump vote on just about everything.

So what will ITC do? Would it risk its credibility if it helps candidates in a primary, only to abandon them in the fall? I don’t think so: the point is here is simply to say, “we will help you/hurt you in the primary: we don’t get involved in the general.” That would be a narrowing of the PAC’s reach, but that would still be enormously important, because it could serve as a means of bringing the Republican Party back to some semblance of sanity on environment and energy policy. At this point, ITC isn’t talking about what it will do in November. We will find out soon enough.