

CLIMATE CHANGE



ENGAGE WITH CANDIDATES

- Find out when and where political candidates are going to speak. Specifically, look for “town hall” style meetings where audience members can interact with candidates and/or policymakers.
- Research the stance that the candidate/policymaker takes on environmental issues and plan your questions accordingly. Be mindful that terms like “climate” or “climate change” can be viewed as polarizing and shut down an opportunity for meaningful discussion.
- Ask your questions in a polite but firm manner. Avoid yes/no questions and instead ask more open-ended questions.
- If allowed, speak with a candidate before or after an event for a more in-depth conversation.

Menno Simons called on government authorities to uphold just policies: “you must see to it that justice is done between two parties in dispute and to free the oppressed out of the hand of the oppressor” (“Foundation of Christian Doctrine,” 1539). For U.S. citizens, we have a duty to ourselves and our communities to participate in our elections. If you have not registered to vote yet, visit washingtonmemo.org/register-to-vote

Many who reside in the United States still struggle for the right to vote. Even those who are not registered voters can still find opportunities to engage candidates at public events or through other means of communication such as letters and social media.

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Introduction

Climate change is an issue that affects our communities at local, national, and international levels. The most vulnerable populations are the least responsible and the most affected by a changing climate. It is vital that we take steps to ensure greater sustainability and address climate change within our communities, our country, and our world. One tangible way we do that is through participating in elections. As we approach election season, we have an opportunity to engage with candidates on issues around climate change and to elect officials who support positive action. This resource serves as a starting point in engaging with candidates about this important issue during the primary and general election season. Use these questions or come up with your own.

The prophet Ezekiel reminds us to care for the world around us: “Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet?” (Ezekiel 34:18) As Christians, it is our duty to care for our planet and to ensure that we protect both our environment and our fellow human beings.

The Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions (CSCS) is a collaborative initiative of Eastern Mennonite University, Goshen College and Mennonite Central Committee to lead Anabaptist efforts to respond to the challenges of climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A COMPLEX ISSUE THAT ENCOMPASSES MANY DIFFERENT AREAS OF PUBLIC POLICY. SEE THE LIST OF SUGGESTED TOPICS AND QUESTIONS BELOW OR CREATE YOUR OWN QUESTIONS.

Vulnerable Communities

We know that the impacts of climate change are most severe for already marginalized and vulnerable members of our society. As Christians, we have a mandate to care for those who are often neglected. We can encourage candidates to consider the impacts that climate change—and addressing climate change—will have on marginalized people within their constituency.

- What steps would you take to assist workers in the fossil fuel industry as the United States transitions to renewable energy sources?
- In recent years, we have seen many examples of marginalized groups facing discrimination during and after natural disasters. What steps would you take to ensure that everyone has access to resources to help them rebuild after a crisis—and to prepare for the next crisis?
- How do you intend to increase the air and water quality of communities that are currently the most polluted, knowing these are often low-income communities or communities of color?
- If you support a carbon tax, how will you ensure that low-income households and rural households are not unfairly burdened by the rising costs of energy sources like auto fuel and heating oil?

A Global Response

Climate change is a global issue. Environmental disasters are increasing, from droughts in Chad and El Salvador to devastating hurricanes in Vietnam. The United States is the largest historic emitter of greenhouse gases; as such, we have a great responsibility to respond appropriately to climate change. The intersections of climate change with issues of migration, food security, health, and conflict highlight the importance of U.S. foreign assistance and U.S. participation in international agreements.

- What is your stance on the United States' role in the Paris climate agreement? How should the U.S. collaborate with other countries in addressing climate change?
- How can the United States be a global leader in responding to climate change?
- What steps would you take to respond to natural disasters and severe droughts that are driving hunger and mass migration around the world?

Disaster Preparedness

In recent years, we have seen an increase in the visible impacts of climate change. Natural disasters, rising sea levels, and increased temperatures threaten communities in the U.S. and around the world. While we work to lower the emissions that cause climate change, we also need to prepare for the increased number of natural disasters that will continue to happen. Federal disaster preparedness policies should ensure that all people, regardless of income, race, or social status, are protected from and prepared for the threats posed by natural disasters.

- As farmers adapt to a changing climate and increasingly difficult weather, how do you intend to respond to their needs?
- How do you plan to ensure that all of your constituents, regardless of race or income, are equally prepared for the threats posed by increased natural disasters, such as wildfires, flooding, and hurricanes?

Responding to Climate Change

Stopping climate change will require a set of policy strategies at the federal, state, and local levels, ranging from curbing carbon emissions to increased use of renewable energy to reforestation. One particular solution, carbon pricing, has gained significant traction in the past few years. Ask candidates what policies they will craft to respond to climate change.

- What policies do you support to address climate change?
- What is your position on increasing the use of renewable energy and encouraging job growth in this area?
- Farmers can play an important role in stopping or slowing climate change through agricultural practices. How should their innovations in responding to climate change be supported?
- Recent legislation has focused on putting a price on carbon as a solution to climate change, such as a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system. Is there a particular carbon pricing proposal you support? How will you make sure that vulnerable groups like low-income and rural households aren't harmed by a carbon tax?

For more in-depth information on these topics and others, visit sustainableclimatesolutions.org