

# Reflections on the Current State of United States Climate Policy

**Roger A. Pielke, Jr.**  
University of Colorado

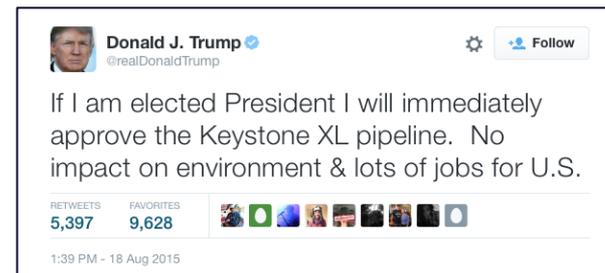
**18 May 2017**  
**Tokyo, Japan**

## Ivanka Trump to review climate change as US mulls Paris pullout

The president's daughter and adviser will look at the issue as he weighs taking the US out of a global emissions-cutting deal

BY JOSH LEDEBMAN AND CATHERINE LUCEY | May 8, 2017, 12:11 pm | 0 5

Share 70 Tweet G+1 2 Email Print Sha



**The Institute of Energy Economics, Japan**  
**International Energy Symposium 2017**

**EPA'S BACK-TO-BASICS AGENDA**

- ✓ Protecting the **environment**
- ✓ **Engaging** with partners
- ✓ Sensible regulations for **economic growth**

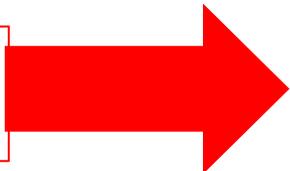
**EPA** #EPABack2Basics www.epa.gov

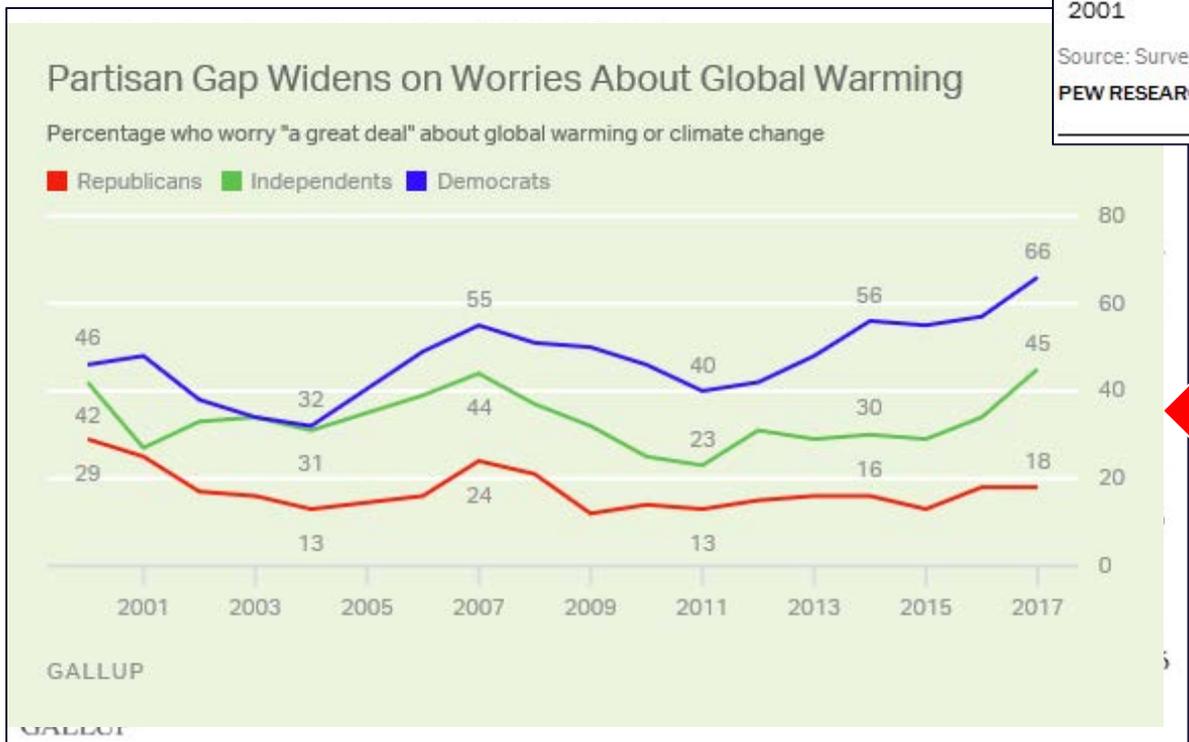
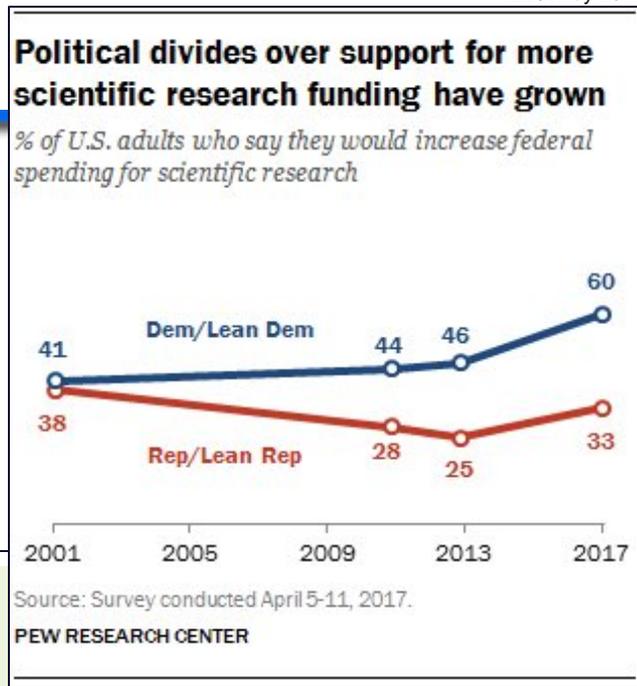
# Main points on US climate policy

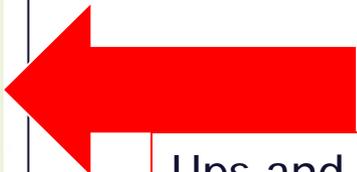
## Main points of this presentation

- **US climate policy is deeply partisan**
- **High-level debate is mostly about symbols not substance**
- **Large-scale trends in US energy production and consumption are separate from much of the public and partisan debate**

# US public opinion

Politicization of science funding 



 Ups and downs of climate worry

# Environmental issues are partisan in Congress

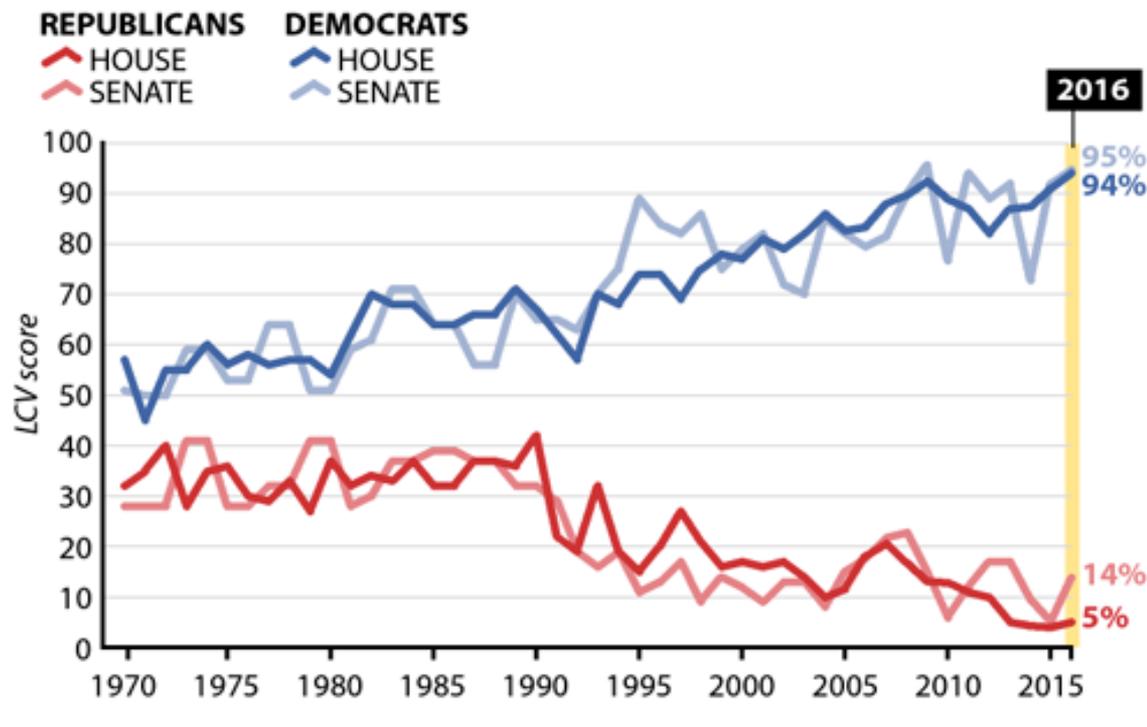
## The Great Divide

With an average 85 percent voting gap between Republicans and Democrats in 2016, Congress has never been so polarized over environmental issues.

inside  
climate  
news

### LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS' ENVIRONMENTAL VOTING SCORES

*U.S. Congress, by chamber and party, 1970-2016*



SOURCE: League of Conservation Voters

PAUL HORN / InsideClimate News

# Climate policy as symbolic politics



# Keystone XL Pipeline as a key symbol

## Obama alumnus: Should have built Keystone

Adam Sieminski, who was administrator of the Energy Department's Energy Information Administration under President Obama, says with a laugh that now he's left the government, he can have an opinion again. On the sidelines of a Brookings Institution confab in D.C. on Monday, he told Axios:

“

**One opinion I don't have to stifle anymore is that I think the Keystone XL pipeline should have been built.**

**Why it matters now:** With Republicans in control of the White House and both chambers of Congress, some Democrats might find it more politically possible to take positions that go counter to certain liberal causes, such as opposing fossil-fuel infrastructure like Keystone, which could lead to more bipartisan energy policy.

**Our thought bubble:** During the seven-year Keystone XL saga (which ultimately led Obama to reject it in November 2015), many Obama administration officials privately said the fight was a distraction and the pipeline should be approved. In the end though, **symbolic climate politics won out over pragmatic energy policy.**

POLITICS



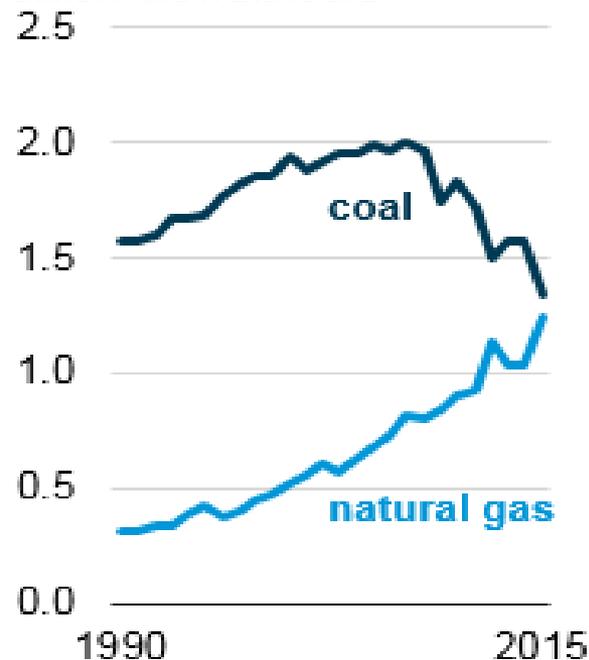
# Long-term trends in US energy



## U.S. electric power sector comparison of coal and natural gas (1990-2015)

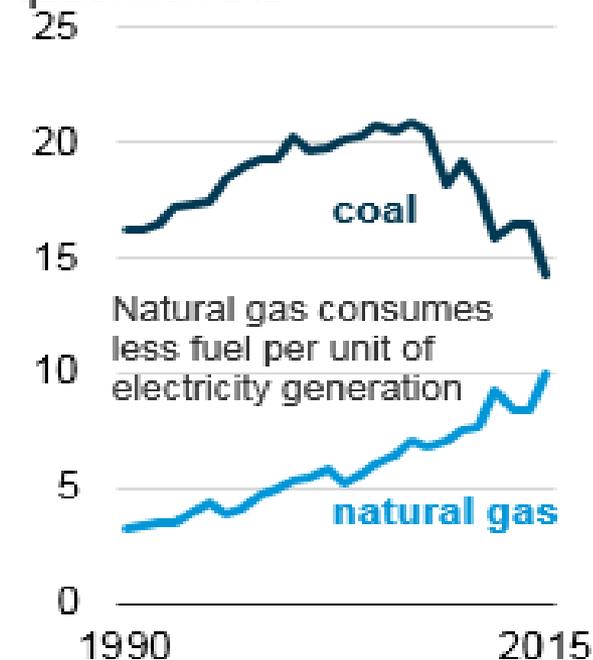
### electricity generation

billion kilowatthours



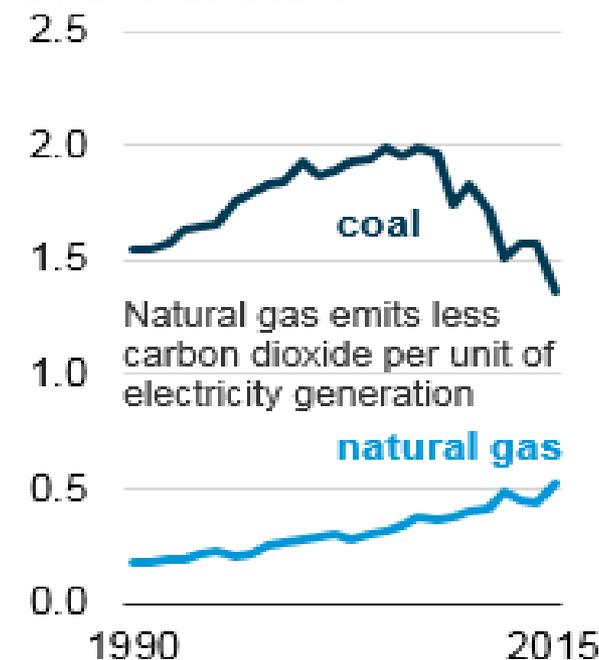
### energy consumption

quadrillion Btu

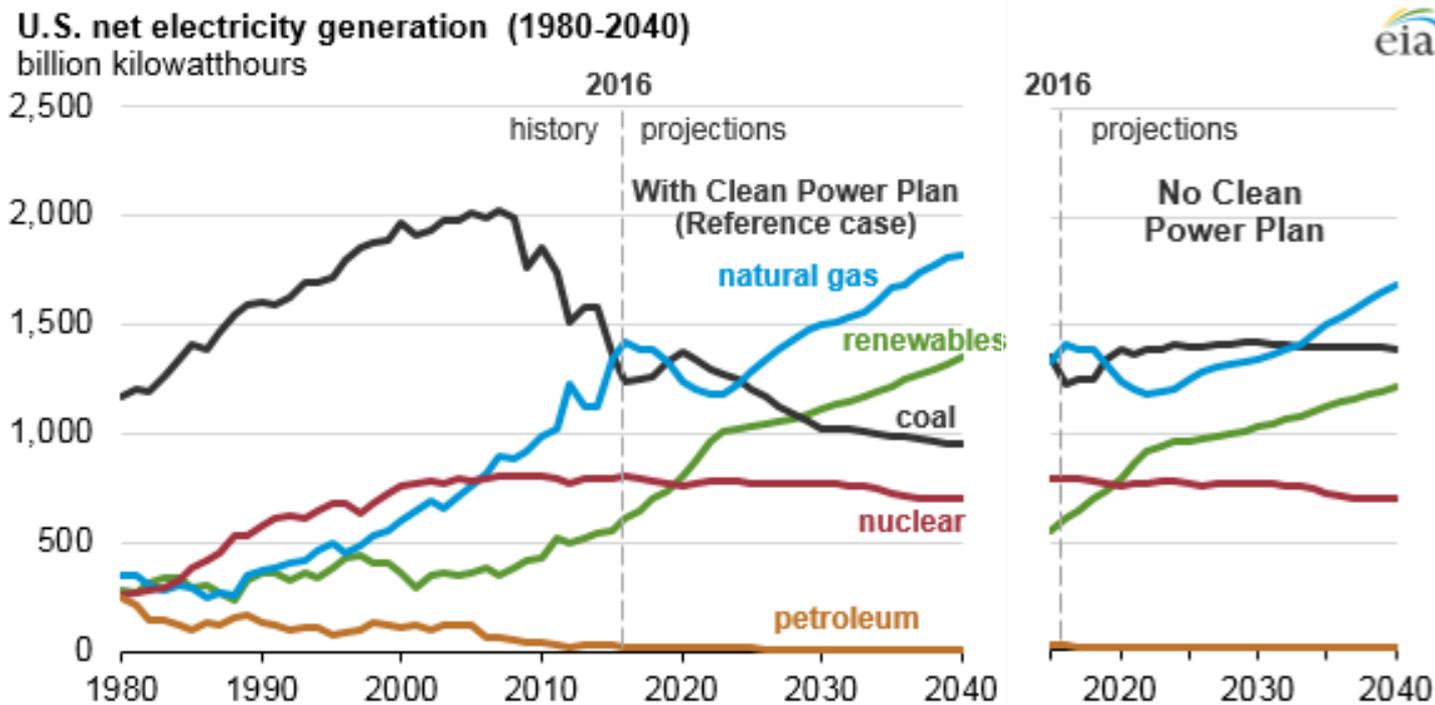


### CO2 emissions

billion metric tons

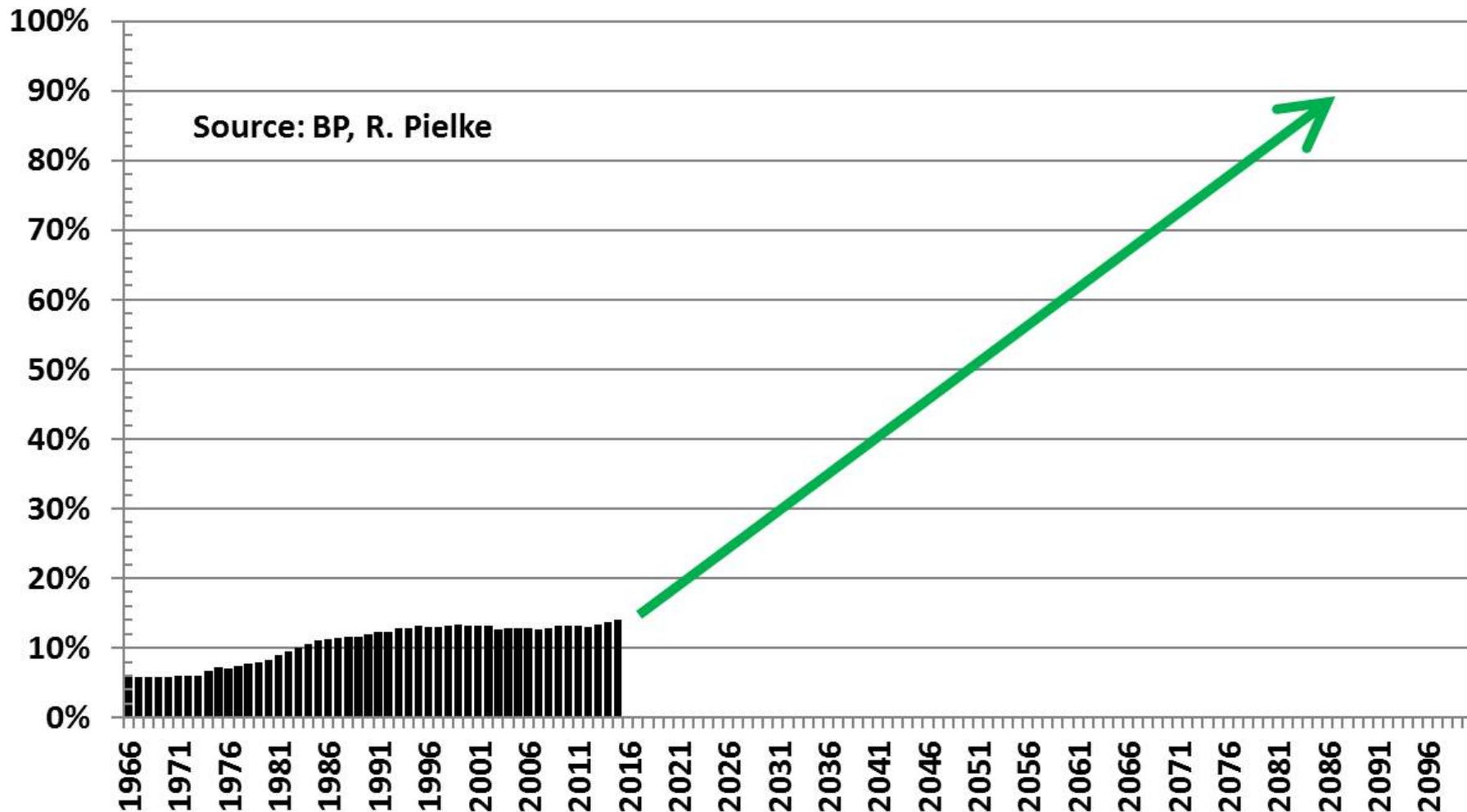


# Impact of Trump cancellation of Clean Power Plan?



# Reminder of the scale of challenge

Proportion of Global Energy Consumption  
from Carbon-Free Sources: 1965-2015



# Looking Ahead – 2017, global CO<sub>2</sub> increase?

S&P Global Platts

HOME CATEGORIES

Home > Coal > China's Coal-F

COAL May 2

**China's coal-fired**

Anyone with doubts about sustain its gigantic econo generation from Beijing's

These data are a treasure and appetite for thermal o from countries including,

One interesting revelation elevated levels post the n kWh in December – and th January 2010.

December's record power China's coal-fired electrici national statistics bureau.

And electricity production New Year lull in February, National Bureau of Statist

This was after double-digi coal of 12.2% in Septembe

The country's seemingly u

**THE BARREL** The

EDITION: UNITED STATES

Business

**Pakistan rai backed plan**

ASIA | Tue May 2, 2017 | 8:48pm

By Saleem Shaikh

ISLAMABAD (The renewable and cl coal-fired power

Officials at the W expected to spen plants of varying

Mohammed Your commerce secret

That is the \$54 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which includes spending of about

**FINANCIAL TIMES**

WORLD US COMPANIES MARKETS OPINION WORK & CAREERS LIFE & ARTS

India Politics & Policy + Add to myFT

**India admits it will miss coal emissions targets**

Power minister takes swipe at west but acknowledges power plants will not meet goals



A thermal power plant outside Ahmedabad in Gujarat © AFP

earlier and in February.

GIN

rd | Hel

SU

DCHEM

il mt

1

nth

)

il

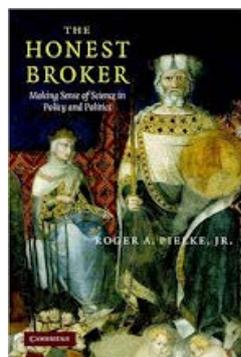
Article continues below...

# Final thoughts on US climate policy

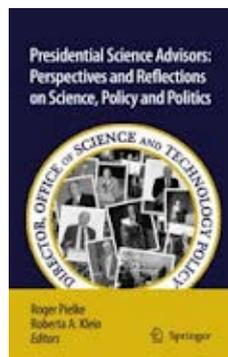
- US climate policy is highly uncertain, mainly because it is a partisan issue and US political situation is fluid;
- Because of the focus on politics there is a possibility that Trump Administration ultimately does not matter much for energy & climate policy;
- Larger trends likely to continue to dominate (e.g., markets, prices, technology, etc.);
- But, can US climate advocates who wish to accelerate decarbonization de-politicize the issue for 2020 and beyond in order to better focus on policy over politics?

# Thank you

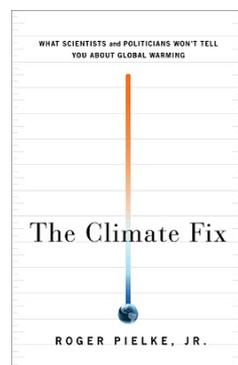
- [pielke@colorado.edu](mailto:pielke@colorado.edu)
- Blogs:
  - <http://theclimatefix.wordpress.com>
  - <http://thehonestbroker.org>
- About me: <http://rogerpielkejr.com/>



2007



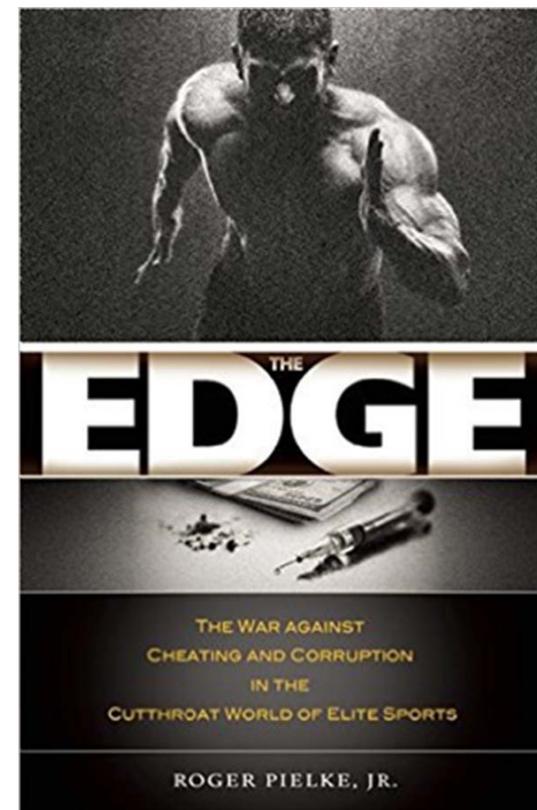
2010



2011



2014



2016