

The Climate Candidate



Jay Inslee, the Governor of Washington, is running for the Democratic nomination for President. He's a seasoned politician, having served in the House of Representatives from two different districts in Washington, first from the rural eastern part of the state and later from Seattle. He's in his second term as Governor. What is unique about Inslee's campaign for the presidency is his focus on climate change as his primary issue. He sees this campaign cycle and this time in history as critical for the success or failure of our efforts to overcome the climate crisis. He seems to have some company: According to [new polling](#), climate change is now the top concern of Democratic voters and independents who lean Democratic. And, not incidentally, [a new report](#) indicates that experts from 28 global think tanks have now ranked "mitigating and adapting to climate change" as [a top priority for policy makers](#).

In a [speech this morning at the Council on Foreign Relations](#), and in a subsequent Q & A with Cynthia McFadden from NBC News and then the audience members, Inslee laid out the moral and economic imperatives for addressing the climate crisis head-on. He described the four pillars of his program: summoning the imagination to understand the depth and the gravity of the situation, building confidence in the ability of Americans to lead on climate, a total commitment in US foreign policy to combat climate change, and new thinking to get at the answers. Building a global climate coalition is a key organizing principle of his program.

He cited the fact that he had 27 policy initiatives, among them an end to coal power production in the US by 2030, a 100% clean power grid by 2035, and a cessation of the sale of gas and diesel vehicles by 2030. His campaign website lays out the thrust of what he calls "America's Climate Mission" [here](#). He also details other aspects of his vision: [100% Clean Energy for America](#), [An Evergreen Economy for America](#), and [A Call to Action for a Climate Conservation Corps](#).

He zeroed in on foreign policy initiatives as the venue this morning was, after all, the Council on Foreign Relations. An [article on this from CNN](#) appeared this morning. On his to-do list would be to get the US back on track in the Paris Accord (no-brainer), but also going after fossil fuel subsidies domestically and prohibiting financing for foreign projects. He also endorses the idea of [carbon tariffs](#). Further, at the Council, Inslee cited the example of China building coal-fired power plants abroad as part of its global Belt and Road Initiative. A large proportion of their development finance spending in energy has been for these plants, and the worst, least efficient

kind too. (See this recent commentary: [Toward a Real Green Belt and Road.](#))

As far as national security goes, Inslee was adamant about pointing out that even though there is a [broad consensus in the US intelligence and defense communities](#) that climate change is a clear and present danger, Trump's denial of it is tantamount to treason. (I, of course, have written on a couple of occasions – [here](#) and [here](#), for instance – about how the Trump agenda is in thrall to the fossil fuel interests. Inslee shares my view as well. In his words: “The Republicans are in bed with the fossil fuel industry.”)

This was an hour very well spent. I commend this session to you. The extremely efficient folks at the Council on Foreign Relations already have the [full video of Governor Inslee's discussion](#) up and running. Check it out.