

April 2017 Dine 4 Democracy Briefer on Environmental Causes

Answers Courtesy of Our Contact at the [WRI](#), reflective of her personal views

1. What has the Trump administration signaled will be its agenda with regard to environmental issues?

Trump's "America First Energy Plan," Executive Order reviving the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipeline projects, and most recent EO "Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth" are just a few signals from the new administration that its agenda will be one of utter disregard for the environment. Add to these examples an executive cabinet filled with fossil fuel enthusiasts, including an EPA administrator that rejects the very robust science underpinning his agency's mission and policies, and it is clear that the administration is not gearing up to be responsible stewards of our nation's lands, waters, biodiversity or air, much less the global climate. Instead, the administration's focus will be nearsighted—on creating energy and environmental policies that may indeed result in short-term economic gains, but at the expense of the medium- to long-term economic prosperity, health, resilience and national security of the United States (and the rest of the world).

2. What are the most pressing issues at stake in the next six months to one year when it comes to fighting to protect our Nation's natural resources?

In the next year, it is critical that we set a precedent for standing in the way of disruptive change in the wrong direction. The most pressing issue at stake in the next 6-12 months is stymieing the signaling from our nation's leadership to the general public, private sector and financial systems that an assault on the natural environment is okay. We must do the best we can through our legal, political, social and economic systems to "hold the line" on the environmental progress that we have achieved to-date—from upholding public policies at the federal, state and local levels, to commitments from the private sector and our very own personal behaviors. We know that under this administration we will not be able to advance an ambitious environmental agenda through federal public policy, but it is critical we prevent losing the ground we have won and leverage gains that can be made elsewhere.

3. How will these policy and regulatory moves affect environmental outcomes now and in the future? What are the biggest worries in this space?

Unchecked climate change is the single greatest threat humanity faces today. And every decision we make in the present has a natural resource and climate footprint that affects the future state of natural systems—from the food we produce and consume, to how we build our cities, to the business models behind the clothes on our backs and the energy sources supplying our electricity. But the impacts of our decisions today, whether policy/regulatory or behavioral, on the environment and our planet have not only consequences for environmental outcomes, but the prosperity of future human society. Reality is that the future of our economic and social lives—our growth and prosperity—are bound by the health and security of our natural

resources and earth systems whether you are a developed country like the United States or an emerging economy. But proactively protecting the planet or even domestic natural resources for the future faces direct competition with other issues and concerns that are viewed as immediate and more tangible because they are more visible today in the here and now. The biggest fear is that we cannot conquer short-termism and local (instead of global) mentalities fast enough—be they in policy, business, personal behaviors—to sustainably develop as a society into a prosperous, secure future for all.

4. How can the average citizen fight back? What are some of the most actionable forms of resistance?

Learn the issues and form an informed opinion. Be an active participant in social demonstrations and in the policymaking process, whether it is through in-person testimony, a logged phone call, or written letters to your legislators and regulators. Be a voice in support of progressive environmental policies in your homes, communities and places of business in your daily lives. And ultimately, regardless of the signal sent by federal public policy, walk the talk and be the change we need to see in the world with your personal demand practices and behavior—from the quantity of water you shower with each day, recycling practices and the products and services you buy, or the companies you invest in. When given the chance, befriend opposition supporters or take the time to discuss the issues with them instead of building social barriers.

5. Tell us why our members should support WRI? What are the ways in which WRI works to fight for our country's natural resources? What are some of your past successes? How are you now mobilizing to fight the Trump administration agenda?

The World Resources Institute is a non-profit global environmental research organization that seeks to build a more prosperous future for the people and the planet based on sound science and research that illustrates the facts. We are not an advocacy organization such as Greenpeace, and we do not have a lobbying arm like The Nature Conservancy, nor wage legal battles like the Environmental Defense Fund. But we are as much a “do” tank as a think tank, and have developed unparalleled knowledge bases and data tools that empower policymakers, civil society, firefighters and emergency service responders, ordinary citizens, the private sector and journalists—for example—to take the fight into their own hands through knowledge application and information transparency. As a matrixed organization, we do not focus our efforts on one cause or resource area alone; we have programmatic work in climate, energy, cities, food, forests and water, as well as centers that cut across these issue areas from a governance, economics, business and finance perspective. Our cross-sector, integrated structure provides a unique value-add in the knowledge sphere. Most recently, modeling work from our US Climate Initiative was instrumental in informing Obama-era policies, including the US Climate Action Plan, and our US Climate economist was borrowed by the Obama administration to produce the United States’ Mid-Century Strategy for Deep Decarbonization of the US economy, which was released in November 2016. Since the election of Mr. Trump, our

President and CEO has across the world given lectures, participated in dozens of panels, and spoken to television audiences on the developments and environmental consequences surrounding the new administration's decisions.

6. Beyond donating, how can our members get more involved with environmental causes?

By learning about the issues and different resource areas, and actively seeking out opportunities to engage in conferences or information-based events that matter to you. There are also ample volunteer opportunities and in today's political climate, a growing number of social demonstrations that provide the perfect chance to participate in an environmental cause.