

Facts about climate change readily available

In his June 4 column, Spencer Lawton asks for more facts about climate change and less hyperbole. He asks, “What, exactly, is the extent to which human activity contributes to this warming?” The answer to this question is explained very clearly by Dana Nuccitelli, a science reporter in an article titled “Study: Humans have caused all the global warming since 1950.” Not only do calculations of the impact of our use of fossil fuel indicate we have caused all the warming since 1950, scientists have also considered natural effects that might be causing the warming (such as natural solar cycles). It’s been shown that natural effects have not contributed to our current warming.

To further answer his question, in the U.S. about 30 percent of our emissions come from electricity production, 26 percent from transportation, 21 percent from industry production, 12 percent from commercial and residential building utilities, and 9 percent from agriculture.

Lawton also asked if climate change will vary based on location. Certainly. Since some climate change warnings may sound like hyperbole, a good rule of thumb is to only focus on possible effects that would be irreversible. The two most commonly mentioned irreversible effects are ice sheet melt leading to sea level rise and species extinctions. For Georgia’s coastline, predictions about sea level rise have been mapped out by ClimateCentral based on two different scenarios: we continue emissions unabated, or we cut emissions. Pictures show a huge difference for Savannah if we cut emissions rather than do nothing.

An explanation of sea level rise facts without hyperbole was produced by NASA.

Climate change facts are pretty hard for many non-scientists to fathom. But there are other non-science facts that may be easier to digest. Citibank studied climate change and determined it is cheaper to switch to clean energy, cut emissions and slow climate change than to continue as usual. Roughly 400 local chambers of commerce have endorsed the EPA’s Clean Power Plan because they know that converting to clean energy creates jobs, is good for local economies and helps fight climate change. Business representatives have gone to Washington to urge stronger responses on climate change, included were representatives from Mars, General Mills, Unilever, Ben & Jerry’s and Nestle.

R Street, a conservative think tank, supports Congressional legislation

on climate change — R Street says climate change is real and the insurance business is one of their specialties. These are facts for non-scientists to ponder.

Lawton and other readers should try attending a meeting of the local chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby. It's easier to understand the facts of climate change when they are also presented calmly, with clear discussions about national policy options, and hope.

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