



---

## The 10 Dumbest Things Ever Said About Global Warming

The most egregious myths, misconceptions and flat-out lies about the future of the planet

by BROOKE JARVIS

JUNE 19, 2013

A list of the dumbest things ever said about global warming is, sadly, almost impossible to curate in any comprehensive fashion. Politicians, talk show hosts, economists, pundits – people are saying dumb things about climate change *all the time*. But after much exhaustive research, we narrowed it down to 10 prize-winningly idiotic statements on this subject.

### 1. Carbon dioxide "literally cannot cause global warming."

People have tried to deny climate science in a lot of ways, but it's hard to beat a complete rejection of well-established atmospheric physics. Joe Bastardi, a meteorologist appearing on Fox News, argued that CO<sub>2</sub> "literally" cannot cause warming because it doesn't "mix well in the atmosphere" (it does). He's also claimed that warming would violate the First Law of Thermodynamics, which states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed. (In fact, global warming has nothing to do with newly created energy, but with the atmosphere trapping energy that's already around.)

### 2. "Snow skiing will be hurt – but water skiing will benefit."

In 1990, as the world was beginning to grapple with the devastating predictions of climate models, a Yale economist set out to determine how much was a reasonable amount to spend on combating the problem. Not that much, he concluded, since "Humans thrive in a wide variety of climate zones. Cities are increasingly climate-proofed by technological changes like air-conditioning and shopping malls." Further, he argued, the hardest-hit sectors – like, say, agriculture – are relatively small parts of the economy anyway. And economic growth in other sectors could compensate: "Snow skiing will be hurt – but water skiing will benefit." How reassuring!

### The Fossil Fuel Resistance: Meet the New Green Heroes

RS contributor Bill McKibben lambasted this analysis in his 2007 book, *Deep Economy*. "It's nice to have microelectronics; it's necessary to have lunch," wrote McKibben. "If global warming 'only' damages agriculture, the rest may not matter much."

### 3. "We must demand that more coal be burned to save the Earth from global cooling."

The "global cooling" myth is another favorite of climate deniers, despite broad scientific consensus that the planet is in fact warming. But it's got to be an especially appealing fiction when you're the CEO of a coal company – this statement is from a tweet by Don Blankenship, then the head of Massey Energy.

#### **4. Climate change is impossible because "God's still up there."**

In 2012, U.S. Sen. James Inhofe (R-Oklahoma) contended that acceptance of climate science was at odds with Christianity – never mind that many Christian leaders and institutions take climate change very seriously. "My point is, God's still up there," he told Voice of Christian Youth America. "The arrogance of people to think that we, human beings, would be able to change what He is doing in the climate is to me outrageous."

A close runner-up in this category: In 2009, Rep. John Shimkus (R-Illinois) cited God's post-flood promise to Noah as evidence we shouldn't be worried. "The Earth will end only when God declares it's time to be over," he declared. "Man will not destroy this Earth." Well, that must be nice to know.

#### **5. God buried fossil fuels "because he loves to see us find them."**

Bryan Fischer, a director at the American Family Association, compared efforts to burn less fossil fuels to telling a friend that you don't like their birthday present. "That's kind of how we're treating God when he's given us these gifts of abundant and inexpensive and effective fuel sources," he observed. "God has buried those treasures there because he loves to see us find them." And everyone knows it's bad manners to turn down a divine treasure hunt.

#### **6. "The President was wearing a trench coat it was so cold, but he's talking about global warming."**

This gem, from U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise (R-Louisiana) in reference to President Obama's 2013 inauguration speech, is part of a long, confused tradition: The conviction that anecdotally observed cold weather of any kind debunks the science of climate change. See also the igloo that James Inhofe's family built on the National Mall (they called it "Al Gore's new home") or the ad from the Virginia Republican Party, aired before the same snowstorm, advising voters to call legislators who supported climate actions and "tell them how much global warming you get this weekend. Maybe they'll come help you shovel." With probably thousands of articles out there now explaining the simple fact that *weather is not the same thing as climate*, this joke gets dumber every time it's made.

#### **7. "I thought it must be true until I found out what it cost."**

Yes, Sen. Inhofe gets two entries. Speaking to Rachel Maddow in 2012, he admitted that his rejection of climate science began with realizing how expensive mitigation would be. Not only is it flatly nonsensical to deny that a problem exists because you don't like its cure, delaying climate action is actually the *more expensive* course. The International Energy Agency has estimated that for every year the world delays taking significant action to curb climate change, we'll end up paying an additional \$500 billion later on.

#### **8. Safeguarding the climate is "a worldview that elevates the Earth above man."**

Rick Santorum was a front-runner for the GOP presidential nomination when he called climate science a "phony theology" – "a worldview that elevates the Earth above man and says that we can't take those resources because we're going to harm the Earth." (Santorum has also said, "We were put on this Earth as creatures of God to have dominion over the Earth, to use it wisely and steward it wisely, but for our benefit not for the Earth's benefit.") This people-vs.-planet idea is another common refrain from climate skeptics. They rarely seem to have considered the fairly obvious point that functioning human society depends on a healthy planet.

**9. "100 years is a long time . . . There is an extremely high chance that the very nature of human society itself will have changed by that time in ways that render this entire issue moot."**

This novel bit of reasoning is from an essay called "**In Praise of Dirty Energy**: There Are Worse Things Than Pollution and We Have Them," by economist and blogger Karl W. Smith, now a writer for *Forbes*. Smith accepts the science of climate change – but argues that we should burn more fossil fuels anyway, in order to spur economic growth. As the climate changes, he believes that people will simply build new cities or move north to Siberia, and build a society so technologically advanced it's somehow progressed beyond the need for a stable climate. Piece of cake!

**10. "I have a theory about global warming and why people think it's real. Go back 30, 40 years when there was much less air conditioning in the country. When you didn't have air conditioning and you left the house, it may in fact have gotten a little cooler out there, because sometimes houses become hot boxes. Especially if you're on the second or third floor of a house in the summer time and all you've got is open windows and maybe a window fan. Or you have some servant standing there fanning you with a piece of paper. When you walked outside, no big deal, it's still hot as hell. Now, 30, 40 years later, all this air conditioning, and it's a huge difference when you go outside. When you go outside now, my golly, is it hot. Oh. Global warming. It's all about the baseline you're using for comparison."**

Oh, OK: All those scientists who have confirmed a pattern of long-term climate change were just getting confused by their air conditioning. Right. Thanks, Rush Limbaugh, for the low-hanging fruit.

<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-10-dumbest-things-ever-said-about-global-warming-20130619>