



## The Green New Deal and Partisan Myths

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According to a recent news article from NPR, “the partisan clash” over the Green New Deal “is likely to be a continuing theme ahead of the 2020 election.” But what if the “partisan” divide is largely a myth outside the halls of Congress? What if the Green New Deal is only “partisan” in the fun house mirror of the media and party ideologues?

In a Yale survey, 81% of polled registered voters supported core elements of the Green New Deal. This image of our country’s overwhelming consensus on environmental policy issues becomes distorted by hype about a “partisan clash.” In this distortion, the importance of public opinion shrinks while the fossil fuel industry benefits from continued business as usual.

Two factors are at play behind the warped mirror before us. Amy Westervelt and others have documented a long, intentional campaign by the fossil fuel industry to transform climate change from a non-partisan issue into a partisan one. In the 1990s, climate change became cast as a “liberal hoax,” while Republican politicians were cultivated as allies in opposition. In tracking contributions to elected officials, the Center for Responsive Politics notes that the oil and gas industry “regularly pumps the vast majority of its campaign contributions into Republican coffers.”

Herein lies the source of the disconnect between public opinion and those who hold office: while the vast majority of voters hold environmentally green positions, their elected representatives bow to a different kind of green—the kind that finances their path to electoral victory. While politicians across the political spectrum are swayed by the green of money, on important environmental issues there is a clear strategy to divide the parties through the artificial creation of a “partisan” issue.

It has been said that a polluted environment inevitably results from a polluted democracy. In the fight against climate change, the results have been disastrous.

To repair this disaster, the terms of debate must be reversed from “partisan” back to “nonpartisan.” Who can’t grasp the common good of clean air for all to breathe? Who can’t find shared purpose in seeking a hospitable planet for our children to inherit?

With his encyclical on climate change, Pope Francis astutely attached this subtitle: “On the Care of Our Common Home.” Caring for the place where we all live should be a unifying issue, not a dividing one. If we fail to see and recognize this simple truth, then our home becomes a house of horrors. If we come to our collective senses to address the environmental crisis, then a look into the mirror can make all of us proud of what we see.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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