

POLITICAL DISPATCH

FROM THE PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE



The articles below are commentary on current events, intended to encourage further reflection and debate. Except for official Board statements, the viewpoints expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the Woman's National Democratic Club.

Good News and Bad News on the Environment

As our nation heads toward the November elections, we have much good news on the climate and environmental front: new EPA regulations limiting greenhouse gas emissions from oil and gas extraction; tripling of wind power generation, and a 20-fold increase in solar energy production since 2008; the [U.S.Navy going green](#) (by using energy efficiency and alternative energy in its new Great Green Fleet); new standards for increasing fuel efficiency for large trucks, buses and other heavy-duty vehicles; China announcing a [national carbon market](#) by 2017, and of course, the president's ground-breaking Clean Power Plan (CPP). Some efforts to push back expansion of coal mining on public lands and to reduce oil drilling in the Arctic have been successful.

Notably, the [Democratic Party Platform](#) takes a strong stand on environmental issues, especially the urgent need to take immediate action to limit climate change.

Yet there is also much seriously bad news: a continuing increase in global temperatures, with 2015 the hottest year ever and June 2016 the hottest month on record worldwide; ever-increasing melting of the earth's glaciers and sea ice; concomitant rising sea levels; warming and acidification of the oceans; floods triggered by heavy downpours; raging wildfires in the wake of severe droughts; unprecedented and life-threatening heat waves in India and the Middle East.

The [Republican Party Platform](#) makes no mention of climate change and presses for more exploitation of fossil fuels, especially coal.

Right-wing candidates and media deny human-caused climate change. Some members of Congress attack and harass climate scientists. The fossil fuel industry and its allies are pushing to open public lands to more drilling, mining, and other activities that damage the environment. Big Republican donors like the Koch brothers, while touting their withholding of donations to the Trump campaign, are still pouring billions into down-ballot races to elect congressional, state, and local candidates who will pursue their anti-science and anti-environmental agenda.

It is crucial that we all get active **now** not only to support the Democratic national ticket but to ensure the election of congressional, state, and local officials who will fight for the environment and for the future of our earth.

*Jean Stewart, Chair
Earth and Environment Task Force*

Note: In late August, The Washington Post published a letter to the editor from Jean Stewart titled "[Deadly Flooding in West Virginia Had Another Cause beyond Global Warming.](#)"

[President Obama Designates the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument](#)

On August 24th, President Obama signed an executive order creating the [Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument](#). According to the [White House](#), the monument includes “awe-inspiring mountains, forest and waters of north-central Maine...and is rich in biodiversity and known for its outstanding opportunities to hike, canoe, hunt, fish, snowmobile, snowshoe and cross-country ski.” The land abuts the neighboring Baxter State Park, and together these areas will bolster “the forest’s resilience against the impacts of climate change.” The executive order also lays out the historical value of the land.

The 87,654 acres of land for the monument was a gift from conservation philanthropist Roxanne Quimby. She originally hoped her land might become a national park, but the necessary congressional was lacking. Critics anticipated increased federal oversight and further land use restrictions if a national park were created. Over the years, Ms. Quimby bought up many tracts of land and continued to allow access but also placed restrictions on hunting, snowmobiling and forestry in some areas.

The logging and paper industries in northern Maine have diminished over the years, and the regional economy has suffered. Ms. Quimby bought much of her donated land from downsizing paper companies with the goal of conservation in mind. Now that the Katahdin Woods and Water National Monument has been established, perhaps efforts may now shift on ways to boost the local and state economy through tourism.

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