

RATIONAL MIDDLE.
NET ZERO 

**REACHING ACROSS THE
CLIMATE AISLE**

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

Bill Squadron:

One of the things we've seen over the past couple of decades is movement toward the majority of the country understanding that climate change is a serious problem and that it needs to be addressed.

Gov. Bill Ritter:

About 75% of Americans say it's happening. Over half of the people who are voters in America believe that we must act and act decisively to address it.

Douglas Holtz-Eakin:

The Democratic Party is all in on climate change as a problem and as something the federal government should address. The Republican Party is far less willing to offer up big solutions.

Secretary James A. Baker, III:

And there's very little working across the aisle to find solutions that benefit the country, and that's regrettable.

Maury Dobbie:

But I do know that we are obligated to figure this out together because we are all on the same planet. While that sounds cliché, it's the truth of the matter.

Sasha Mackler:

Climate has been very polarized, but it is changing. It's becoming more mainstream and well understood across the electorate, across the country, which is great, and it's also becoming more bipartisan.

Secretary James A. Baker, III:

The number of climate deniers is diminishing. I mean, used to be 10, 12 years ago, a lot of people would say climate isn't changing. It's pretty hard to say that now.

Maury Dobbie:

I believe people are changing their attitude because they see in common sense terms the change of the climate, the droughts, the wildfires, the extreme weather, and they are seeing it for themselves, and some are being affected by it.

Paula Glover:

We understand like we see these things happening. Some folks may not understand why it's happening, but the larger question, I think in the political question that we are always struggling with is how do you address this problem?

Eric Drummond:

We're at a point at which we're having to figure out how to collaborate across the aisle, so to speak, and how to collaborate with people that weren't formally as interested in carbon and carbon mitigation as they ought to be.

Bill Squadron:

And the fact that we have gotten to that point where people are talking about how do we do this and on what timetable and with what mechanisms, rather than do we need to, or whether we should do it, is an enormous sign that we're moving in the right direction. Now, there's a gap between people who believe that transition needs to happen extremely quickly, extremely aggressively, and those that believe it needs to perhaps happen more gradually.

Sasha Mackler:

The real trick now from a policy perspective is finding the areas of alignment. I think one of the major insights that is starting to become clearer to stakeholders across the economy, across the country, across the political spectrum is that this is an emissions' problem, but at its core, it's an economic problem. Because the problems associated with climate change really come from the utilization of energy and energy is the engine of our economy. And so any solutions to climate change need to be anchored in solutions for our economy.

Emily Reichart:

The good news is that there are a lot of things that both sides can agree on. Those are things like having a job, economic prosperity, the importance for America to be the forefront, the leader in various industries.

Gov. Bill Ritter:

If you can demonstrate the ability to create this economy that's going to really be about building jobs and jobs in your state, jobs in your community, that's an important sort of common interest. And then there is a business case for clean energy solutions that is attractive. You want to make a difference for your consumers, you want to make a difference for people who pay rates into utility companies. You want to make a difference. At the same time, on the public health side of this equation, these are solutions that allow you to address all of those things at the same time.

Emily Reichart:

This is I think, what we as a country can get behind, those jobs, those opportunities, how people fit into that, how it fits into people's communities. If we can think about how the innovations that

are needed, if we can understand them and we can understand that scientists and engineers will be needed, people to assemble the end product will also be needed. So there are jobs along the line for everyone and every skill level.

Gov. Bill Ritter:

Those are all things that everybody cares a great deal about. And if you have the chance to sort of define the narrative in terms of health, jobs and economic interests, then you've got a winner.

Douglas Holtz-Eakin:

We've made some real improvements in our approach to climate change and in ways that I'm not sure everyone appreciates.

Eric Drummond:

The Inflation Reduction Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, as well as the \$1.5 trillion Budget Reconciliation Act. There are climate pieces embedded on all three of those budget authorities or pieces of legislation.

Douglas Holtz-Eakin:

That's going to go for hard infrastructure like ports and roads and bridges.

Paula Glover:

A lot of investment on grid modernization for energy efficiency, weatherization. All of those things actually do impact climate in our ability to be resilient. And there are significant wins in that we need that kind of investment in our infrastructure if we are going to move to a different type of energy economy.

Emily Reichart:

There is a lot that is happening. New York State passed major climate legislation. The city of Houston built a climate action plan. When you think about what's happening in states, what's happening in cities, what's happening in the private sector, the youth of this country, the youth of the world.

Sasha Mackler:

The desire that they have to see the energy transition happen across the political spectrum is really helping to shape how different policy-makers are starting to engage on these issues.

Eric Drummond:

The Democratic Party currently is a pretty big tent, and typically that is a difficult group to shepherd and lead, but what has happened in the last 24 months is around big policy matters, they've come together.

Sasha Mackler:

And in the Republican Party, I think it's really interesting to see that younger conservatives and women in the conservative party are really driving the Republicans to take a fresh look at climate in a way that we haven't seen before.

Gov. Bill Ritter:

We've had Republican governors in America who have moved clean energy packages, governor Sandoval in Nevada, Governor Snyder in Michigan, Governor Baker in Massachusetts, Governor Hogan in Maryland. And then Republican legislators at the state level as well.

Bill Squadron:

From a government standpoint, what we've seen that I think has been very effective at local levels and state levels is where you've seen state governments, city governments, communities working with industry, with the science and technology communities, with innovation, with research to find a path that works.

Eric Drummond:

So once you bring the public sector and public together with their politicians and legislators, that's that formulation that is so powerful in the American political environment where people on the ground inform their legislators, and together we work on building the kind of legislation that we know is most likely to move the ball forward, and that is essential.

Secretary James A. Baker, III:

I know that politics is a blood sport, but once you get to governing, there needs to be some recognition that the way you get things done is through compromise and working with the other side, finding a solution that doesn't trade away your most important principles and values, but maybe shaves them at the margins in order to get a deal.

Maury Dobbie:

In order to find success, we need to build coalitions in a respectful, forthright, purposeful way, listening to each other, finding solutions and going and doing it. Now, that's hard to do because it's complex. You have to have everybody rowing the same way, but we can do it.

Paula Glover:

So I think looking at the local level, the state level, and the federal level is the way we're going to get this done. I do not think that we can rely on any one branch and think that, that we're going to resolve this problem. We as voters, those of us who take that right and responsibility seriously actually do have a part to play in this. You do have to worry about who is your mayor, who's on your town council. You should be thinking about all those things. Around every single issue, I think as a voter that is important to you, climate is one of those.

Gov. Bill Ritter:

The real way that we affect change is not going to be through brawn on the left or the right. It's going to be through the vital places of the body politic that say, this matters to people, it matters to our country, it matters to our globe. And in order to do it, we need to be informed by both sides of the aisle, and we need to do it in a way that we can guarantee not only the change happens, but that it's durable. And that's going to happen in the middle.

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