

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes in various shades, creating a modern and dynamic feel. The shapes are primarily on the right side, with some extending towards the center.

Climate Change: Is Our Political System Up to the Challenge?

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30 Years of Policy Failure

- ▶ No durable long-term US commitment to GHG emission reduction
- ▶ Wavering and equivocation by our leaders
 - ▶ George H.W. Bush and Rio (2008)
 - ▶ Bill Clinton and Kyoto (1997)
- ▶ Legislation necessary for long-term progress but the bar is very high
 - ▶ Congress came close in 2009 with Maxman-Markey but couldn't close the deal
 - ▶ Prospects have weakened since then
- ▶ Obama did more on climate than any President but relied on executive action without a strong political backstop
- ▶ Trump has wiped away all of Obama's gains and turned the clock back to 2008

The High Price of Failure

- ▶ US GHG emissions increased by 16 percent between 1990 and 2007 - despite international agreements in 1991 and 1997
- ▶ Global emissions have also soared, driven by massive energy demand in China - now the number 1 global emitter by a large margin
- ▶ Global emissions were the highest ever in 2018
- ▶ US and EU emissions have declined but not enough to offset the upward spike in developing economies
- ▶ Levels of GHGs in the atmosphere continue to increase
- ▶ Global temperatures are steadily rising year-by-year
- ▶ Climate impacts are now palpable and serious

Why Have We Failed?

- ▶ The science has been clear for decades and is getting stronger -- and the magnitude of the threat is more apparent
- ▶ So why are our institutions paralyzed?
 - ▶ Climate science denial?
 - ▶ Lobbying by fossil fuel interests?
 - ▶ Fear of the economic costs of taking action?
 - ▶ Perceived threat to freedom of choice?
 - ▶ Lack of day-to-day climate impacts on average citizens?
 - ▶ Tradeoffs between near-term costs and long-term benefits?
 - ▶ Concern that sacrifices by US will play into the hands of China?
 - ▶ Doubts whether we can really stop global warming and it's even worth trying?

Can a New Dynamic Take Hold?

- ▶ The opportunity
 - ▶ Growing public awareness and concern catalyzed by Green New Deal
 - ▶ The reality of climate change is sinking in
 - ▶ We now have low carbon technologies that work at an acceptable cost - the right incentives will accelerate deployment
 - ▶ States are showing strong leadership
- ▶ The challenge
 - ▶ The partisan gap is still huge and common ground has shrunk
 - ▶ Even if Ds win the White House, the country will remain deeply divided and vocal minorities can stymie legislation
 - ▶ There are limits on how fast the economy can decarbonize
 - ▶ Even with deeper emission cuts, temperature increases that cause unacceptable harm are unavoidable