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Remember reality of climate crisis when casting vote

By Paul Fisk

My friends in politically progressive groups look at me somewhat askance when I admit I'm now focused on climate change more than the election.

They correctly point out that little will get accomplished on

. Paul Fisk lives in Latham the climate crisis without a national regime change, and that our immediate focus should be on getting out the vote. Quite true, but it's equally important to remind voters that after Donald Trump and COVID-19 we will still be faced with a climate crisis that continued to approach with increasing rapidity and severity as we diverted our attention to "more immediate" problems.

Meanwhile, we're heading for another year of record high temperatures. Polar regions are warming over twice as fast as the rest of the world. It passed 100 degrees Fahrenheit north of the Arctic Circle this summer in Siberia. Major polar ice sheets are collapsing, Greenland glaciers have passed the point of no return and growing areas of permafrost are no longer "perma."

The climate crisis should be a major motivator in disinfecting the White House and securing the Senate at the polls this fall, as the Earth's poles steadily melt.

There are lessons to be learned from the Trump and COVID-19 disasters that we should well remember in our next battle over climate. The Reagan era attitude that "government is the problem" captivated many in both parties over the past few decades. Trump and COVID-19 have reminded us that government was created to serve the people in ways that cannot be done by the private sector, but to do so it needs competent and caring leadership, particularly in times of emergency.

We rose to great challenges in earlier times. We won world wars, conquered killer diseases and put men on the moon. Government led the way. Yet lately we have sunk to having “leaders” afraid to ask people to make the small sacrifice of wearing a mask in public to help spare the lives of their friends and neighbors. Republicans fear jeopardizing their reelection by intruding on the a) constitutional, or b) God-given right of their base to cough coronavirus in a crowd.

Trump has provided us with a teachable moment. He has given us the kind of government under which our democracy clearly cannot survive. Absorbing Fox fantasies, he has created his own alternate reality. And by rejecting all norms of honorable and ethical behavior he has corrupted and exposed the fragility of our democratic institutions. Our legal system has proved unable to keep pace with his depredations. Then he denied the pandemic peril for months, completely abdicated his responsibility to lead a federal fight against it, and abandoned the individual states to fend for themselves.

Continuing this foolhardy lack of leadership and rejection of reality into the climate battle would lead to global disaster. Inaction would result in major portions of the Earth becoming increasingly less habitable for as much as a third of the world’s population, creating untold suffering and global chaos.

As it did with COVID-19, the rest of the world recognized the seriousness of the climate crisis and began taking action long ago, while we have been unable to overcome our fossil fuel industry-induced doubt and inertia. We have lost world respect, and precious time in waging the battle against global warming.

We’re in a deep hole and lately have been digging it deeper. Continuing the Trump tragedy, with its constant denial, “drillin’ and spillin’” would prove deadly. If you want to make America great again, think of what’s happening at the poles when you go to the polls.