It’s the End of the World as We Know It

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Numerous scientists have claimed that unless immediate action is taken to reduce carbon emissions, global catastrophe and irreversible damage will take place by 2040. (NRDC, 2018) Whether or not the timeline is accurate, governments and corporations should undergo legislative environmental reform to minimize these effects. There is no denying that climate change and neglect for the environment has had detrimental effects on the earth. From the dying coral reefs to massive wildfires and hurricanes, many intense events occur due to the changing climate. One major way to reduce or possibly reverse climate change’s effects is through policy change. By changing the laws surrounding fossil fuels, production, waste management, and agriculture, and other environmentally-taxing activities, the earth will be a better place. Government intervention is imperative in saving the earth.

In 1970, President Richard Nixon signed an act to establish the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). He also signed the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. In 1982, President Ronald Reagan took away 30 percent of the EPA’s budget and made it difficult to pass environmental regulations. During the 1990’s, President Bill Clinton sign the Kyoto Protocol in attempt to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change, but the U.S. senate rejected it. The next term, President George W. Bush declined to sign the Kyoto Protocol. Finally, in the 2000s, President Barack Obama signed bills to reduce emissions and authorized funding for solar energy projects. (Ballotpedia) When President Donald Trump took the presidency in 2017, he made his political intentions clear. While calling for a border wall and the removal of Obamacare, it seems the environment was not a first priority. Since he took office, President Trump has announced his intention to remove the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement in fears of its effect on energy production and the nation’s economy. He also declared a war on coal, lifted restrictions on oil and gas, and attempted to repeal the Clean Power Plan. (Beeler, 2018) Whether Republican, Democrat, or anywhere in between, this period in time is critical for political action towards the environment. The president elected in 2020, whether it be President Trump or a new candidate, must prioritize the government. Without strict environmental regulations and legislation, climate change will continue to devastate the earth.

An increase of two degrees Fahrenheit sounds miniscule and ineffectual, but when the initially stable global temperature rises, major changes to the environment occur. The issues linked to climate change include higher intensity natural disasters, rising sea level, the death of coral reefs, the collapse of ecosystems, and numerous other hazards. Human activities such as deforestation, overproduction, agriculture, and excessive waste speed up the effects of climate change due to pollution, urbanization, and overuse of fossil fuels. These activities lead to mass amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and ultimately accelerate global warming. The Earth’s climate and systems lack the ability to adapt to the constant changes human bring. Denying climate change means prolonging the suffering of communities and ecosystems. Refusing to combat the issue through regulations and legislation encourages the activities that cause climate change.

The majority of Americans recognize climate change and the need to fix it. According to an article from Forbes, 61 percent of Americans find climate change to be an issue and want the government to address it. (Nace 2017) Democrats seem to prioritize climate change more so than Republicans, but the issue is not a political one. Regardless of one’s political status, race, gender, religion, or other social category, climate change will bring the same consequences to all.

Scientists are referring to today’s global time period as the sixth mass extinction. The Holocene, or Anthropocene extinction, reveals the mass extinction of species due to human activity. The current state of the climate is a result of human activity and need action immediately. Global citizens want to battle this phenomenon, but they need the help of government regulations to protect the environment.

According to the world’s most brilliant scientists, we still have time left. There is time left to adopt clean energy solutions, regulate corporate pollution, institute environmental legislation, and save life as we know it. The world continues to advance every day and move at a rapid pace, but society must slow down and evaluate the consequences of a technologically advanced, profit-centered life. I strongly encourage my fellow citizens to live more sustainably, support eco-friendly companies, participate in social movements, reach out to local politicians, and create noise about the global catastrophe we currently face. Change starts at the individual level, and corporations and governments will eventually follow suit behind those they serve. Time is running out and the future of humanity is at stake.

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