

STEVEN P. DINKIN A Path Forward

## STRATEGIES NEEDED TO RESOLVE CLIMATE CHANGE DEBATE

When it comes to contentious issues in America, our cup runneth over. You know the list: guns, immigration and border security, reproductive freedom, LGBTQ rights — and the one that looms large this sizzling summer, climate change.

Once we casually inquired, “So, how’s the weather?” It was a way to make small talk (and a question I never asked when calling relatives in Wisconsin during the winter months). Now, it’s a query with real and sometimes devastating consequences on human lives, in communities across the country.

Nearly two weeks after the Maui firestorm, I can’t get the images out of my mind. With more than 100 casualties and search efforts continuing, the fire is the deadliest in the U.S. in more than a century. Hawaii Gov. Josh Green has estimated that rebuilding will cost \$6 billion.

Californians have a strong affinity for our neighbors across the Pacific. Hawaii is a favorite vacation destination; according to hawaii.gov, 41 percent of the state’s 9.2 million annual visitors come from our region. And because we well know the destruction that fires cause, what happened in

Maui seems that much more personal.

During the pandemic, my daughter spent a month in Maui. While the house where she stayed is still standing, the property was damaged. A friend who visited Lahaina with his family last year just learned their vacation home was destroyed.

While officials have not determined a cause for the blaze, power lines — downed by strong gusts of wind — are suspected. Maui is experiencing drought conditions this year, deemed “severe” in the southern and western coastal areas. According to the Hawaii Wildfire Management Organization, the introduction of non-native, fire-prone grasses and shrubs to the island has “exponentially increased” wildfire threats.

And after an unusually wet and chilly winter, drought reappeared across the west — and along with it, record heat. In Phoenix, temperatures exceeded 110 degrees for 19 days, beginning in July. Just last week, parts of the Pacific Northwest rejoined the triple-digit club, after experiencing unseasonable warmth in spring.

As columnist Amanda Taub

recently observed in The New York Times, climate change will require new political strategies and agreements at the very time the U.S. is facing heightened polarization.

Optics are a complicating factor here, as voters reward politicians for delivering emergency relief — but not for investing in natural-disaster preparedness. It creates “misaligned incentives,” Taub said, noting that \$1 spent on preparedness is worth approximately \$15 in emergency response.

And the partisan split is wide. The latest FiveThirtyEight/Ipsos poll found that 36 percent of Democrats and just 5 percent of Republicans ranked climate change as a top issue facing the country.

We disagree on its cause: 88 percent of Democrats and 35 percent of Republicans said that climate change was “entirely” or “mostly” caused by humans. Similarly, we disagree on solutions, with 76 percent of Democrats and only 17 percent of Republicans wanting stricter regulations.

Regardless of party, the poll revealed a direct linkage between concern about climate change and personal experience. Forty-six

percent of Republicans who had encountered extreme weather conditions in the past five years expressed worry, compared with just 17 percent of those not affected.

With a growing number of climate disasters in our country — and their widespread consequences — we could have consensus before long.

Ian Harrison, president and CEO of Washington, D.C.-based Bipartisan Climate Action, has a different approach in mind. BCA talks to and raises funds for members of Congress who are (or have potential to become) climate champions. Founded during the 2022 electoral cycle, the organization is focused on advancing “significant and enduring legislation to reduce carbon emissions while growing the American economy, creating American jobs, and advancing America’s energy independence.”

Harrison is optimistic that BCA can find 30 to 40 members in both chambers who fit the bill. He is encouraged that the bipartisan House Climate Solutions Caucus has been relaunched under new leadership. There is also a Conser-

vative Climate Caucus, led by John Curtis, R-Utah, who is supported by BCA. While membership is limited to Republicans, Harrison believes its existence proves a broader appetite for climate solutions than many of us imagine.

Solving the climate crisis will take a sustained effort. Passage of landmark legislation like last year’s Inflation Reduction Act (which contained three major climate-related provisions) is certainly important, but Harrison says we need to pay attention to the “tiny” bills — on matters like grid management and recycling — passing a few every year for the next 20.

It’s just like baseball, where base hits (and not home runs) win games. But as people in Maui and across the country are coming to know — when it comes to our climate, the stakes are much higher. Bipartisanship could turn out to be the real game changer.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCCRC’s programming, visit [nccrcenter.com](http://nccrcenter.com)

## SMOLENS

FROM B1 they have done what they are supposed to do according to the law.

It’s a tangled web, for sure.

The authority’s primary concern is not how this would affect the State Water Project. For one thing, SDCWA receives virtually no water from the State Water Project.

Increasing water rates are always a worry and they’re very high across the county, especially in Rainbow and Fallbrook.

But a main issue is that SDCWA can ill afford to lose more water sales. Those sales have been plummeting over the years largely because of a tremendous public conservation ethic that took water managers by surprise.

Beyond potentially losing sales to Rainbow and Fallbrook, the city

of San Diego will begin dramatically cutting its water purchase through the authority after the city’s wastewater recycling system comes online. Known as Pure Water, the system is expected to launch in 2025 and provide nearly half the city’s water by 2035.

The city is by far the largest water-purchasing member of SDCWA and, by virtue of a weighted vote, its most powerful.

Shrinking water sales puts further pressure on the authority to raise rates to pay off billions in debt from moves to secure water supplies over the years, including a desalination plant and increased storage capacity.

Rainbow and Fallbrook say they get little benefit from much of that, particularly the expensive desalinated water.

Litigation aside, LAFCO’s decision needs to be confirmed by voters in the Fallbrook and Rain-

bow jurisdictions. District officials recently started the process to hold the elections on Nov. 7. There had been discussion of scheduling them for the March primary.

The speedup is an attempt to get the vote in before state legislation changing the rules would take effect.

At the city of San Diego’s request, Assemblymember Tasha Boerner, D-Encinitas, carried Assembly Bill 399, which would require voters countywide to approve the two districts’ exit. San Diego argues their shift to the Riverside agency would affect virtually all county residents, so they should have a say.

That measure is pending in the state Senate and would need a two-thirds vote of the Legislature to become law in time to change the election process. Should that happen, don’t be surprised if AB 399 is challenged in court.

However, the countywide election costs would have to be paid by the state and that may slow the bill in the Legislature, according to the Voice of San Diego.

Meanwhile, separate from the Rainbow-Fallbrook dispute, the local water world was jolted by a recent development in Imperial County.

Some context first: Under an agreement hatched nearly 20 years ago, the Imperial Irrigation District sends water to the San Diego authority, which financed conservation measures to help free up the water.

Both the IID and the water authority had long-running disputes with the Los Angeles-based Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, which until relatively recently controlled much of San Diego’s water. The battles subsided after, among other things, the retirement of

Metropolitan’s longtime general manager, Jeffrey Kightlinger.

The Imperial district, which has some of the strongest water rights in the West, recently hired Kightlinger as a consultant.

Suffice it to say, San Diego water officials, some of whom still view Kightlinger as something of a Darth Vader figure, will be keeping a wary eye on where that leads.

## What they said

Sen. Cynthia Lummis, R-Wyo., discussing Donald Trump’s indictments with the Huffington Post.

“I think it shows that politicians lie, and [people] know they’re lying. The liar knows that people know he’s lying, and the people that are being lied to know they’re being lied to. That is political reality in 2023.”

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## Celebrations

The San Diego Union-Tribune



## 50th Anniversary

Marilyn Swift Shelton and John Huston Shelton

Happy 50th Marilyn and John! On August 18, 1973, you married in Napa, California, and began a lifetime of hard work, adventure and love. Your journey started in Colorado, then moved on to Alaska (for 17 years), Washington state, back to Colorado and now to Carlsbad, California. Through it all, you’ve been true to yourselves and faithful to everyone around you. Your love for family and friends and your zest for life and learning shows in everything you do. We look forward to many more excellent adventures. Congratulations from your family and friends!



## WEDDING

Nicole Kristine Capone and Corey Robert Crosser



Congratulations to Corey Robert Crosser of Rancho Santa Fe, California, and Nicole Kristine Capone of Boston, Massachusetts.

The couple exchanged vows and celebrated their love in a beautiful ceremony held at the Wychmere Beach Club on the sandy shores of Cape Cod, on the 22nd of July 2023.

They were surrounded by their closest friends and family, as they embarked on this sacred journey as partners for life, promising to cherish, support, and uplift each other through all of life’s adventures.

Congratulations, Corey and Nicole! May your days be filled with boundless happiness, unwavering love, and countless cherished moments.