

viewpoint

Health dangers arise from climate change

point of view
john ward

Political battles make lively news, but they drown out the widespread reports of damages climate change causes to human health.

Eleven medical associations, representing about half the doctors and physicians in the country, are now forming a group — the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health — to bring attention to the growing threat and push for action.

Their first report, “Medical Alert: Climate Change is Harming Our Health!” stated that urgent action “to reduce heat-trapping pollution by reducing energy waste and accelerating the inevitable transition to clean renewable energy” is necessary for our continued health.

Rising heat increases diabetes and death from heat stroke, kidney disease and dehydration.

Older people are more affected but also young children, pregnant women, outdoor workers and city dwellers (because of the higher temperatures in cities).

Some 9,000 student athletes a year are treated for heat-related diseases.

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine reports an expected rise in heat-related deaths of about 257 percent by the 2050s.

Carbon pollution raises global temperature, increases asthma, heart attacks from hardened arteries (20 percent higher in more polluted areas) and recent research indicates possibly degenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s.

About 5.5 million people died prematurely in 2013 because of indoor and outdoor air pollution (1.6 million in China). Families living downwind from coal-fired power plants have higher rates of low birth-weight babies.

Rising temperature caused by CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions increase allergies and asthma by lengthening the pollen season.

More allergens, worsened air quality and rising ozone will swell the current number of people with asthma globally (334 million) and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (210 million).

According to Jonathan Patz, director of the Global Health Institute at the University of Wisconsin, an analysis of the Clean Air Act, which President Donald Trump hopes to undo, found a benefit level 30 times greater than the cost.

A 2016 study reported that rising heat and dryness doubled the area burned by forest fires in the U.S. West since 1986. It’s a risk that will affect Florida where, a 2015 NASA study found global warming

will cause increased megadroughts.

A study of a 2008 fire that burned more than 45,000 acres in North Carolina resulted in a 50 percent increase in treatment for respiratory illnesses.

Heavier downpours in a warmer world wash fertilizers and animal waste into rivers, lakes and oceans where they increase algae, viruses and bacteria.

Drinking or swimming in contaminated water or eating fish from it can cause diarrhea, vomiting and more severe reactions. In 2014, a toxic algal bloom in Lake Erie required shutting down the Toledo water supply.

The higher water vapor levels in warmer air increase mold’s range and are spoiling more corn, peanuts, cereal grains and fruit. A 2016 report warned that warming temperatures with erratic precipitation could cause crops to accumulate increased mycotoxins (poisons produced by fungi that can lead to cancer and death.)

Bug-borne diseases such as Lyme, West Nile, Chagas, dengue, chikungunya and Zika are spreading.

Rising temperatures have shortened the breeding cycle of mosquitoes, enabling them to produce more progeny, and have more than tripled their life span. This longer life allows them to pass on to their offspring the ability to transmit the diseases they carry.

A rapidly growing world population and decreased crop yields caused by rising temperatures and increased drought, together with a fish supply threatened with collapse by hotter, more acidic oceans, pollution and overfishing, will greatly increase the 3.7 billion people worldwide who are malnourished today.

Crops will have less food value since more CO2 increases carbohydrates in plants and lessens nutrients and protein.

Climate change is also a threat to mental health. People who survive the worst extreme weather events, especially children, the poor, the elderly and those with existing mental health disorders, experience despair, anger, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicidal thoughts and behavior.

Severe drought in India in 2014-15 increased farmer suicides by 40 percent.

We don’t have to accept this danger. Moving to a clean energy economy will improve our health, preserve our environment and save money — a win-win.

It’s our choice.

John L. Ward is professor emeritus in the University of Florida’s School of Art and Art History. In retirement, he studies climate change research.

Trump fans have reason to dislike media



ruben navarrette
washington post writers

The saying goes, “Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean they aren’t after you.”

This applies to President Donald Trump’s supporters.

A CBS News/YouGov.com poll finds that 85 percent of Trump’s strongest supporters interpret criticism of him

by the news media or political establishment as attacks on them.

“They’re taking this very personally, which is striking to me,” said CBS surveys director Anthony Salvanto to “Face the Nation” host John Dickerson.

It’s a bad sign when a journalist is the last one to figure out what’s going on.

In the two years since Trump got into politics, his supporters have been labeled hateful, reckless, racist, gullible, dimwitted and worse.

Trump didn’t divide America. He merely exploited those fault lines.

One of the deep divisions is based on elitism and feelings of superiority. Americans are looking down on each other.

Conservatives think they’re better than you because they work harder, give more to charity, display more patriotism and go to church more often.

Liberals think they’re better than you because they’re more compassionate, care more about civil liberties, speak out more often against racism and homophobia and worry more about climate change.

Those who went to college and live in big cities like to think they’re more intel-

ligent and more sophisticated.

Those who have spent more years in the workforce and live in small towns like to believe they have stronger values.

When I suggested in a recent column that many people had tuned out the media because they found them to be shrill and petty in their criticism of Trump, a reader responded that the media shouldn’t let up on, for instance, the question of whether Russia colluded with the Trump campaign just because some Americans are “too intellectually lazy” to follow the tale.

Most of the time, the elitists don’t even know how vulgar they sound when they put down someone else.

Consider the case of Chris Falcinelli, who recently contributed a piece to the media-focused news site Mediaite. He actually bragged that he “came up with the notion that Donald Trump is the ‘Dumb Person’s Idea of A Smart Person.’”

Impressive. You have to wonder how much brain power that required.

“Trump is the dumbest version of smart, and the most hideous form of rich, and the weakest, most transparently pathetic kind of strong,” Falcinelli wrote. “But in the same way that Scapple is a meat, and Milli Vanilli was a musical act, and the Cleveland Browns are a football team, Trump is smart and rich and strong. At least if you are dumb.”

Someone should tell this genius that when you’re trying to influence public opinion, it isn’t smart to insult the public.

So Trump voters are right. This isn’t just about your candidate. It’s about you.

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Another view: Sean Delonas Cagle Cartoons



reason midweek

Voters should do away with term limits



ron littlepage
times-union columnist

In May 1991, the Times-Union editorial board opined on a proposed referendum to limit Jacksonville City Council members to two consecutive terms.

This was in the heyday of the “Eight is Enough” movement aimed at Congress, state legislatures and city halls.

“The two-term limitation on Jacksonville’s City Council is the political equivalent of a mirage,” the editorial said.

“It looks good from a distance, but the closer you get, the less substance it has.”

Later that same month, a much younger me wrote a column about the proposed term limits for council members.

“Hear! Hear! “Eight years is enough for anyone on the council.

“Limiting terms will lessen the power of incumbency and encourage more and better qualified people to get involved in the process.

“This sounds radical, but it might even allow us to return to the concept of citizen-legislators instead of professional politicians.”

During the intervening quarter of a century, I’ve spent a lot of time watching the City Council work.

I was wrong about term limits, and the Times-Union editorial was right.

City Councilman Matt Schellenberg now wants voters to have a chance to decide whether to keep term limits for council members and also for the city’s constitutional officers and School Board members.

The knee-jerk reaction of some will be that voters have already answered those questions.

The fact is the turnout in May 1991 was pathetic when limiting the terms of council members was decided.

The glamour races of mayor and sheriff had already been decided in the primaries.

Of the city’s 314,654 registered voters, only 64,957 — 20 percent — bothered to go to the polls.

The referendum passed overwhelmingly with 82 percent in favor, but that’s 82 percent of only 20 percent of the registered voters.

And if once voters have spoken, it’s forever and ever established, those who imbibe would still be drinking illegal whiskey and beer today.

Schellenberg’s main argument is that term limits force experienced officials out of office and with them goes their institutional knowledge.

Newbies in office have to begin the learning curve all over again.

Jacksonville has been deprived of talented council members, constitutional officers and School Board members because of term limits.

And Schellenberg is right when he says voters get a chance to impose term limits every four years when they can kick out elected officials who aren’t doing a good job.

The power of incumbency, it turns out, isn’t all it was cracked up to be.

Schellenberg defeated an incumbent to win his Mandarin district, and Anna Lopez Broche beat an incumbent in her at-large race.

And as much as voters decry professional politicians, they keep electing them.

Term-limited council members often move on to the Legislature. Even Gov. Rick Scott, who portrayed himself as the anti-politician, is eyeing a move to the U.S. Senate.

It must be something about drinking the water.

But having experienced people at all levels of government isn’t a bad thing, especially with the opportunity to cull the ones who shouldn’t be there with every election.

Schellenberg brought up this same idea last year, and he had some support on the council.

Suggestions included changing it to three four-year terms and not having it apply to current council members.

I would pitch term limits altogether and let current members take their chances at the polls if they seek re-election.

The discussion was dropped because last year’s ballot included the sales tax for pension debt and the council wanted the focus to be on that.

Schellenberg has now filed legislation that would put the referendum on the August 2018 ballot.

My reaction to doing away with term limits?

Hear! Hear!

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Did wild boars kill ISIS fighters?

Social media has shared a post claiming that wild boars killed three ISIS terrorists in Iraq who were hiding in brush before an ambush outside Kirkuk, Iraq.



FACT CHECK

Want something checked out? If you see or hear about something that needs a Fact Check, email carole.fader@jacksonville.com

The facts: The basic story is true but details differ, so it’s unclear which version of the story is accurate.

The report first appeared in the Iraqi publication Alsumaria News on April 23.

TruthOrFiction.com reported that by April 25, the United Kingdom’s Telegraph newspaper picked up the story under the headline, “Wild boars maul ISIL fighters to death in Iraq.” That report cites the deputy head of Kurdish intelligence service in Kirkuk:

“ISIL fighters respond-

ed to the deaths by going on a killing spree of wild boars in the area,” said Brigadier Azad Jelal, the deputy head of the Kurdish intelligence service in Kikurk.

“Three fighters from ISIL were near the Peshmerga checkpoint in al-Rashad. They met some feral boars and the boars killed the three fighters,” he told The Telegraph.

The Telegraph reported, however, that the three men were unarmed. They had likely

defected from ISIS and were trying to escape at the time of their deaths, the newspaper reported.

Versions of the mauling that appeared in American publications, such as the New York Post and Newsweek, tell a different story. In those versions, eight ISIS fighters were waiting to ambush anti-ISIS tribesmen (not trying to defect from the terrorist group) at the time of the boar attack. Three were killed while five were supposedly injured, Newsweek reports.

It’s not clear which version is true. In all versions of the story, three men affiliated with ISIS were mauled by wild boars, so TruthOrFiction.com calls that part true. But since other details can’t be confirmed, this report is also “unproven.”

Local contacts for Congress members

Note to readers: For email, enter the contact info in your web browser.

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