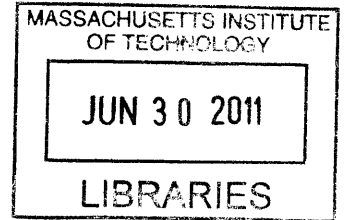


READING THE TEA LEAVES:
*The Tea Party Movement, the Conservative Establishment,
and the Collapse of Climate Change Legislation*

by

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B.A. English
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ARCHIVES

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
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Master in City Planning
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ABSTRACT

The Tea Party movement, which derives its name and revolutionary zeal from the 1773 Boston Tea Party anti-tax protest, emerged in response to the Obama Administration's economic stimulus package and later coalesced around opposition to universal health care, union collective bargaining rights, and raising the debt ceiling. In a less visible fashion, however, the movement has also set its sights on another target—environmental regulation.

In fact, the Tea Party played an important but little-noticed role in preventing the passage of comprehensive energy and climate change legislation. Tea Party campaigns against the Senate's American Power Act 2010, or Kerry-Graham-Lieberman bill, pressured Lindsey Graham (R-SC) to withdraw support for the bill, demonized the cap-and-trade approach to regulating greenhouse gas emissions, and reinvigorated skepticism about climate-change science.

A closer examination of these campaigns reveals that the Tea Party is motivated by an antiregulatory ethos, rooted in response to anti-New Deal liberalism and anti-Communism, that is not marginal or extreme, but consistent with that of the Republican Party. The uprising is, therefore, a manifestation of the conservative establishment's rightward shift—a move propelled by a network of entrenched free-market advocacy groups, think tanks, charitable foundations, industry interests, and mainstream conservative media. This dynamic conservative network—defined by the unique role of Koch Industries and the climate change “denial machine”—has largely enabled the Tea Party's success.

The future of the Tea Party is uncertain and several factors suggest that the wave of populist fervor may have crested. However, even if protests subside, the Tea Party's antiregulatory ethos is likely to endure as part of the Republican Party's increasing conservatism.

Thesis Supervisor: Judith A. Layzer

Title: Associate Professor of Environmental Policy

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INTRODUCTION: A CAUTIONARY TALE

Bob Inglis is a Tea Party casualty—and a cautionary tale for South Carolina Republicans.¹ In June 2010, the former six-term Republican Congressman from South Carolina's Fourth District lost a primary challenge by 42 points to Tea Party-backed county solicitor Trey Gowdy. Inglis had earned a lifetime score of 93 percent from the American Conservative Union, but was not conservative enough to placate his rightward shifting—and decidedly angry—electorate. Inglis had taken several stances unpopular with the Tea Party movement, but largely attributes his defeat to his belief in human-caused climate change. “The most enduring heresy, really, was just saying that climate change is real and that we should do something about it,” says Inglis (quoted in Flatow 2010).

The Tea Party movement, which derives its name and revolutionary zeal from the 1773 Boston Tea Party anti-tax protest, materialized in response to the Obama Administration's economic stimulus package and later launched attacks on universal health care, union collective bargaining rights, and raising the debt ceiling. In a less visible fashion, however, the movement has also set its sights on another target—environmental regulation. The Tea Party has coalesced around the core principles of fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government, and free markets.² These values translate into an

¹ *Mother Jones* first described Representative Inglis as a “Tea Party Casualty” (Corn 2010).

² These are the Tea Party's core principles as defined by the Declaration of Tea Party Independence drafted by a coalition of at least 60 Tea Party groups (Pappas 2010). The preamble of the crowd-sourced *Contract from America* similarly stresses the importance of individual liberty, limited government, and economic freedom (Contract 2010).

antiregulatory environmental agenda defined by opposition to policies—like cap-and-trade—that fetter markets for energy and other products and services.

The Tea Party played an important but little-noticed role in preventing the passage of comprehensive energy and climate change legislation—and in derailing the larger public dialogue on developing a national response to global warming. The success of Tea Party campaigns against the Senate’s American Power Act of 2010 was threefold: pressuring sponsor Lindsey Graham (R-SC) to withdraw support for the bill, demonizing the cap-and-trade approach to regulating greenhouse gas emissions and reinvigorating skepticism about climate-change science. A closer examination of these campaigns reveals that the Tea Party is motivated by an antiregulatory ethos—rooted in response to anti-New Deal liberalism and anti-Communism—that is not marginal or extreme, but consistent with that of the Republican Party (Layzer forthcoming). The uprising is, therefore, a manifestation of the conservative establishment’s rightward shift (Abramowitz 2010)—a move propelled by a network of entrenched free-market advocacy groups, think tanks, charitable foundations, industry interests, and mainstream conservative media. This dynamic conservative network—defined by the unique role of Koch Industries and the climate change “denial machine”—has largely enabled the Tea Party’s success.

A HARSH CLIMATE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE LEGISLATION

On June 26, 2009, the American Clean Energy and Security Act, sponsored by Representatives Henry Waxman (D-CA) and Ed Markey (D-MA), passed the House by a vote of 219 to 212. The bill proposed a cap-and-trade mechanism, which would set a decreasing limit on carbon emissions then allocate a select number of permits that companies could buy and sell to cover their pollution. This market-based approach had garnered support not just from the Obama Administration, but from a coalition of environmental and business leaders called the U.S. Climate Action Partnership, which includes groups like the Environmental Defense Fund, Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, as well as prominent businesses like Dow Chemical, Duke Energy, General Electric, and Shell Oil.³ Waxman-Markey employed this mechanism to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent below 2005 levels by 2020 and by 83 percent by 2050—a more ambitious goal than President Obama’s call for a 14 percent reduction by 2020. It remains the first—and only—piece of climate change legislation to be approved by a congressional chamber to date.

The narrow passage of Waxman-Markey drew conservative backlash and, in the summer of 2009, Senators Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and John Kerry (D-MA) struggled to usher a similar bill through the Senate.⁴ However, in October 2009, Bob Inglis’s South

³ There is, however, a group of environmental and business interests that favors a carbon tax over cap-and-trade primarily for the simplicity of its design and inherent predictability of the carbon price (Yale Environment 360 2009).

⁴ In addition, responding to concerns about escalating energy costs, Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Susan Collins (R-ME) proposed an alternative “cap-and-dividend” plan that would require energy producers to bid on “carbon shares” at monthly auctions guaranteeing that 75 percent of auction revenues would be given

Carolina colleague Senator Lindsey Graham (R) introduced a Republican push for cap-and-trade. Graham teamed up with Kerry to unveil an ambitious bipartisan plan to pass climate change legislation in a *New York Times* op-ed. The duo's strategy featured a "market-based system" to curtail carbon emissions paired with a substantial investment in renewable energy. The plan also included a suite of "sweeteners" to attract Graham's fellow conservatives: streamlined permitting for nuclear power, investment in clean coal technology, and expanded domestic oil and gas exploration. Beyond framing climate change as a threat to economic prosperity, Graham and Kerry, both military veterans, also made a security argument: "Even climate change skeptics should recognize that reducing our dependence on foreign oil and increasing our energy efficiency strengthens our national security."⁵ Shortly after the op-ed was published, Graham recruited a third party to the effort, Senator Joseph Lieberman, the Connecticut Independent who boasted experience both drafting climate change legislation and crossing party lines. The trio ramped up talks with Senate Republicans, wary Democrats, industry interests, and environmental groups, in an attempt to deliver the promise of "tri-partisan" legislation.

Having earned a score of just six percent from the environmentally focused League of Conservation Voters in 2009, Graham was an unlikely champion of climate change legislation. Although a conservative (he received a score of 88 percent from the

back to consumers. Competition from this alternative bi-partisan bill further complicated Kerry-Graham-Lieberman efforts (Layzer 2010).

⁵ In line with comments made by President Obama and EPA Chief Lisa Jackson, the pair framed legislation as a more desirable alternative than EPA action, which they dismissed as "tougher" and lacking "job protection" and "investment incentives." This move would later haunt Democrats attempting to protect the EPA's right to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act.

American Conservative Union in 2009), Graham has crossed the aisle on key issues including supporting the confirmation of Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor. Graham is reported to have come to the climate change bill as a “dealmaker” seeking to promote nuclear power and expanded oil drilling (Lizza 2010). As Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune noted, however, Graham became “the most inspirational part of the triumvirate...advocating for strong action on climate change from an ethical and a moral perspective” (quoted in Lizza 2010).

Despite gaining support from the environmental community and select industry representatives, Graham remained aware of his own political vulnerability. Amid growing Tea Party activism in South Carolina, which bolstered the popularity of junior Senator Jim DeMint (R), Graham urged Kerry and Lieberman to speed up negotiations so he could avoid becoming a Fox News target: “it’s gonna be all cap-and-tax all the time, and it’s gonna become just a disaster for me on the airwaves,” he warned (quoted in Lizza 2010). So insiders feared the collapse of tri-partisan negotiations on April 15, when an alleged White House leak (Lizza 2010; Vogel 2010) produced the following headline on FoxNews.com: “WH Opposes Higher Gas Taxes Floated by S.C. GOP Sen. Graham in Emerging Senate Energy Bill” (Garret 2010).

On April 24, just two days before the senators planned to reveal their proposal, Graham withdrew from negotiations. In a letter to Kerry and Lieberman, Graham dismissed the decision of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) to table their bill in order to pass immigration reform as “a cynical political ploy” (quoted in Broder 2010a). Moving forward without Graham, Kerry and Lieberman released a bill in May titled the

American Power Act, which aimed to cut emissions 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020 and 83 percent below 2005 levels by 2050. The bill ultimately failed to garner enough support from the Senate and the White House, languishing in the summer heat and expiring with the August recess.

EXPLAINING THE COLLAPSE OF THE AMERICAN POWER ACT

There were gale force economic, political, and special interest winds blowing against global warming legislation in 2010 that were beyond the influence of its champions. The question should not be “Why did they fail?” but “How did they get so far?”

- *Daniel J. Weiss*
Americans for Progress Director of Climate Strategy (2010)

The Kerry-Graham-Lieberman bill, or American Power Act, fell amid a maelstrom of factors, most notably economic insecurity, bipartisan political opposition due to regional and ideological divisions, and activism from select industry advocates. The protracted recession gave traction to antiregulatory claims that pricing carbon would result in devastating economic consequences (Layzer 2010). In particular, unemployment hovered around 9.6 percent, and historical data suggest that the enactment of major environmental legislation correlates with—and perhaps requires—significantly lower unemployment rates (Weiss 2010).⁶ Many senators, especially moderate Democrats representing the nation’s coal and agriculture states, grew reluctant to endorse a policy

⁶ Weiss (2010) contends that “an analysis of the unemployment rate when fundamental environmental protection laws were enacted since Earth Day 1970 found that the annual unemployment rate was 6 percent or lower most of the year of enactment.” This analysis includes all major pollution control laws and the Endangered Species Act. It does not include non-regulatory laws or laws that have some pro-environment provisions as part of a broader bill like the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

that would be traced to higher energy bills (Layzer 2010). Antiregulatory conservatives and their industry allies, wielding influence through campaign contributions, lobbying, and public campaigns, sponsored opposition and sowed fear about the cost of cap-and-trade (Weiss 2010). Electric utilities, coal, chemical, natural gas, and oil groups jockeying for provisions and exemptions, or flat out attempting to kill the bill, ramped up lobbying efforts (Mulkern 2010; Weiss, Lefton, Lyon 2010). Al Gore explains, “It’s virtually impossible for participants in the current political system to enact any significant change without first seeking and gaining permission from the largest commercial interests who are most affected by the proposed change” (quoted in Lizza 2010)⁷. As the August recess approached, at least five Democratic senators were expected to cross party lines and join the bloc of Republican opposition assembled by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) (Layzer 2010; Weiss 2010). By contrast, not a single Republican was committed to voting for the Kerry-Lieberman bill—not even Lindsey Graham (Wiener 2010).

Some argue that the main reason for the demise of the American Power Act—beyond economic, political, and special interest forces—was failure of leadership by the president. In the *New Yorker*, Ryan Lizza argues that the White House erred by not prioritizing climate change above health care and by adopting a political strategy that kept the president isolated from the legislative process. Obama had engaged directly in

⁷ Kerry, Graham, and Lieberman proactively engaged major industry players like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, American Petroleum Institute, and Edison Electric Institute in climate bill negotiations (Broder 2010). Some praised this cooperative strategy, while others like Friends of the Earth’s Erich Pica condemned the bill’s “boons to polluting corporations” (2010).

brutal battles against unified GOP opposition to pass both a \$787 billion stimulus package and health care overhaul. He even stepped in to help House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) complete a remarkable whip effort to pass Waxman-Markey (Layzer 2010). But by the spring of 2010, amid enduring economic turmoil and deepening partisan divides, Obama ceded his politically risky climate change agenda. According to Lizza, “[the] Administration had led the effort to find workable compromises in the case of the bank bailouts, health-care legislation, and Wall Street reform. But on climate change Obama grew timid and gave up, leaving the dysfunctional Senate to figure out the issue on its own” (Lizza 2010).

Similarly, environmentalists contend the Obama Administration failed to capitalize on the Deepwater Horizon disaster to advance climate change legislation.⁸ In the president’s Oval Office address in response to the crisis, he emphasized the need to “embrace a clean energy future” and referenced the Waxman-Markey legislation as “a bill that finally makes clean energy the profitable kind of energy for America’s businesses” (Obama 2010a). The president did not mention Kerry-Lieberman, cap-and-trade, or even the word emissions, however. In early July, an alliance of top environmental groups, including the Environmental Defense Fund, National Resources Defense Council, and Union of Concerned Scientists, wrote a letter imploring the president to personally usher climate change legislation through the Senate before the August recess. “White House leadership is the only path we see to success,” they wrote, “just as your direct leadership

⁸ The Kerry-Lieberman bill included provisions for expanding offshore drilling, therefore making it difficult to position the legislation as a policy for avoiding future disasters.

was critical in the passage of the recovery plan, health care reform, and other administration successes” (Fox et al. 2010).

What environmentalists deride as a failure to lead is more logically understood as a product of the larger economic, political, and interest-group context. Polling data suggest that the confluence of these three influences created a polarized electorate that was, on balance, unwilling to take economic gambles for uncertain environmental gains. In March 2009, a Gallup poll reported that, for the first time in 25 years, a majority of Americans said that economic growth should be given priority over environmental protection, even if the environment suffers to some extent (Gallup 2009). Less than a year later, Pew Research Center asked Americans to prioritize 21 different issues for President Obama and Congress. In that poll, the economy ranked first, while global warming ranked last (Pew 2010).⁹ Subsequent polling indicated that the seeds of doubt planted by conservatism activism had begun to bear fruit. As concern about climate change waned, climate change skepticism waxed, especially among conservatives (Gallup 2010a). In light of these indicators, the president and his team of advisors likely calculated that forcing a vote on the American Power Act was, quite simply, not worth the political risk (Layzer 2010). The Administration, fence-sitting Democrats, and Lindsey Graham were all reading the polls—or perhaps more aptly, reading the tea leaves.

⁹ To clarify, 28 percent of respondents categorized global warming as a top priority, while 83 percent categorized the economy as a top priority. Energy and environment were listed as separate issues, with coming 49 percent and 44 percent listing them as top priorities respectively.

THE ROLE OF THE TEA PARTY

To an extent, the Tea Party is implicit in the above analysis, in that it is a creation of Weiss's "economic, political, and special interest winds blowing against global warming legislation." Yet the Tea Party is also a distinct force—dismantling the Kerry-Graham-Lieberman bill and signaling the resurgence of a sweeping antiregulatory agenda.

According to former Lieberman climate-policy advisor Danielle Rosengarten Vogel, "the Tea Party played a major role in derailing our effort" (Vogel 2011). Vogel describes the movement as the "backdrop" behind the interplay of economic and political forces that led to the bill's demise.¹⁰ She believes the Tea Party's August 2009 nationwide town hall meetings and March 2010 health care protest in Washington forced lawmakers to acknowledge the muscle of the uprising. Vogel points to Tea Party efforts aiming to exploit the political vulnerability of Graham, the bill's lone Republican sponsor, as evidence of the movement's attack on the tri-partisan negotiations.

Tea Party campaigns against the Kerry-Graham-Lieberman legislation successfully pressured Lindsey Graham to abandon the bill and to temper his stance on climate change (Sheppard 2010). These efforts vilified cap-and-trade as a threat to American freedom and economic well being, relying upon and reinvigorating skepticism about climate change science. But this agenda is not entirely new and the Tea Party appears to be just the latest narrator of a decades-old conservative storyline that has

¹⁰ Vogel acknowledges the role of the recession and electoral timing and notes a series of strategic choices made by the White House that ultimately made Graham appear "left of the president" (Vogel 2011). The White House freely gave away all of the bill's so-called sweeteners, leaving Graham with no bargaining chips to attract Republican supporters.

“depicted the victims of environmental regulation as ordinary people, small businesses, and individual landowners; the villain as an overweening federal government and its army of out-of-touch bureaucrats; and the likelihood of economic damage more imminent and serious than the possibility of environmental harm” (Layzer forthcoming, 371).

Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin trenchantly explain the Tea Party phenomenon as “a new variant of conservative mobilization and intra-Republican party factionalism, a dynamic, loosely-knit, and not easily controlled formation of activists, funders, and media personalities” (2010, 37). As the following exploration of Tea Party campaigns against the American Power Act will show, the lines between these activists, funders, and media personalities—as well as those between the Tea Party and Republican Party—are often unclear. In South Carolina, Tea Party campaigns were publically executed by new local Tea Party groups like RINO Hunt, new national Tea Party groups like Tea Party Patriots, and entrenched national free-market advocacy groups like Americans for Prosperity and FreedomWorks. The latter two organizations, founded nearly 15 years ago by libertarian juggernauts Charles and David Koch, quickly mobilized to coordinate some of the first national Tea Party protests, which took place just ten days after passage of the stimulus bill (Burghart and Zeskind 2010).¹¹ As Martin Cohen summarizes, “There’s this unique mix of elite involvement and

¹¹ FreedomWorks, quickly organized a 25-city Tea Party tour “where taxpayers angry that their hard-earned money is being usurped by the government for irresponsible bailouts, can show President Obama and congressional Democrats that their push towards outright socialism will not stand” (Jordan 2009).

grassroots organizing...it might not be exciting or controversial to say that it's a mix, but it is" (Cohen 2010).

Another point that warrants further explanation is perhaps more controversial—the unprecedented influence of Fox News. According to a CBS/*New York Times* poll, the overwhelming majority of Tea Party supporters have never used a Tea Party website or social networking platform. The poll showed that of the 47 percent of Tea Partiers that get most of their information about the movement from television, 67 percent reported watching Fox News most often (CBS/*NYT* 2010). Analyzing Fox's role in promoting the movement through both quantity and quality of coverage,¹² Williamson, Skocpol, and Coggin describe the network as transcending journalistic and even propagandistic functions to serve as a “national advocacy organization actively fostering a social protest identity” (2010). Far-right pundits like Glenn Beck imbued this identity with anti-Communist fanaticism and cultivated a potent ideological synergy between Tea Party groups. Several scholars have extended Richard Hofstadter concept of the “paranoid style in American politics” to Beck's conspiracy-laced chalk talks (Miller 2010; Wilentz 2010). Yet the conservative base, marked by economic anxiety and distrust of government (Pew 2010b), was ripe for Beck's conspiracy-laced chalk talks, as a July 2010 Democracy Corps poll reported that Beck is “the most highly regarded individual among Tea Party supporters,” seen not as political commentator or entertainer but as

¹² In terms of quality, the authors note the role of Fox personalities in directly promoting select Tea Party protests. In terms of quantity, their analysis conducted in the spring and summer of 2009 suggests that CNN coverage was largely reactive, while Fox coverage was “anticipatory,” increasing coverage before major rallies and continuing a steady drumbeat in between events (2010).

“educator” (Wilentz 2010). In the context of the American Power Act, Beck has resurrected and refocused latent anti-communist sentiment to cast cap-and-trade as a menace to capitalism, and global warming as a ploy concocted by its money and power hungry proponents.

Beck has also, in a less extreme manner, reinforced the popular rebranding of cap-and-trade as “cap-and-tax.” “Cap-and-tax” is spoken by Tea Party activists and Republican leaders alike, but the phrase was amplified by the conservative “echo chamber,” defined by Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Joseph N. Capella as the insular dialogue between Fox News, Rush Limbaugh’s talk radio, and the opinion pages of the *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* (2010). The phrase “cap-and-tax” has appeared in 67 *WSJ* editorials since March 23, 2009. Subsequent editorial headlines effectively mirror the arch of the congressional cap-and-trade debate: “Cap and Tax Collapse” on April 3, 2009; “Cap and Tax Fiction” on June 25, 2009; “Cap and Tax Delay” on September 2, 2009; “Cap-and-Tax Escape” on February 17, 2010; “Son of Cap and Tax” on July 22, 2010; and finally “The Death of Cap and Tax” on August 2, 2010.¹³ The surprising fact that “cap-and-tax” was not prominently featured in any of the Tea Party’s major campaigns against Graham in South Carolina is perhaps further evidence of the echo chamber’s elegance. Conceivably, to Tea Party activists close to the echo chamber, cap-

¹³ These findings are based on a simple content analysis of *WSJ* editorials available through the Factiva search engine. To provide additional context, the headline “Cap and Tax Collapse” refers to the Senate vote in which 26 Democrats and all 41 Republicans determined that the passage of comprehensive energy and climate change legislation would require a 60-vote supermajority. “Cap and Tax Fiction” condemns the Waxman-Markey bill’s “crushing costs,” “Cap and Tax Delay” describes the postponement of the Kerry-Boxer bill as “a major victory for the U.S. economy,” and “Cap-and-Tax Escape” praises the departure of BP America, Conoco Phillips, and Caterpillar from the U.S. Climate Action Partnership. “Son of Cap and Tax” and “The Death of Cap and Tax” condemn the Kerry-Lieberman bill and celebrate its defeat, respectively.

and-trade had become so absolutely synonymous with “cap-and-tax” that the phrase need not be highlighted—the “tax” was implicit.

THE TEA PARTY TARGETS THE AMERICAN POWER ACT

The Tea Party’s war against the American Power Act actually started months before the Kerry-Graham-Lieberman negotiations began. In June 2009, national Tea Party groups launched a largely retroactive attack on the House’s passage of the Waxman-Markey bill in an attempt to preempt ratification in the Senate. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, and American Petroleum Industry launched complimentary efforts (Layzer 2010) to further the conservative *David versus Goliath* narrative by spreading fear about the catastrophic socioeconomic costs of big government environmental regulation. Just hours before Waxman-Markey passed, Glenn Beck dedicated his “One Thing” segment to reinforcing the Tea Party’s cap-and-trade talking points. “Why in the middle of a global economic crisis would we even consider a bill that that *Wall Street Journal* says would be the biggest tax increase in American history?” asks Beck. “The science is not settled on any of this, not even close. This is about power, money, and control.” Further setting the stage, Beck then introduces Americans for Prosperity (AFP) vice president Phil Kerpen. “I think this is a watermelon bill,” said Beck, ceremonially slicing the fruit. “I think you’re exactly right,” said Kerpen. “This bill is green on the outside, the thinnest green on the outside, and inside it’s deep communist red... This is just an excuse for central planning, central control of our economy, socialism” (Beck and Kerpen 2009).

Later that evening the House narrowly passed Waxman-Markey—thanks to eight Republican votes. Jenny Beth Martin, co-founder of Tea Party Patriots (TPP), immediately joined an emergency conference call with leaders from FreedomWorks and other organizations (Martin 2010). TPP is regarded as the most active and authentic national grassroots Tea Party organization (Burghart and Zeskind 2010; Williamson et al. 2011), boasting 1,800 affiliated groups and 15 million members, yet Martin admits that FreedomWorks was a chief funder of their national rallies and leaked emails suggest that the group has controlled aspects of TPP messaging (Williamson et al. 2011).¹⁴ FreedomWorks—now led by former House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-TX)—promotes a so-called “free-market approach to environmental protection” and tries to build “a grassroots juggernaut capable of going toe-to-toe with...extreme enviros” (FreedomWorks 2011a, 2011b). Martin is far more reluctant to define a Tea Party environmental platform or to confirm the prevalence of climate change skepticism within the movement. But she recalls with a smile the results of that late night call to discuss the eight Republicans that voted for cap-and-trade: “We called them ‘cap-and-traitors’” (2010). This phrase then reverberated throughout the echo chamber as Beck showed a mock wanted poster of the eight GOP “cap-and-traitors,” while running their phone numbers across the news ticker under the flashing text “Call now!” (Beck 2009).

¹⁴ TPP is one of three main national Tea Party groups that emerged in the months following the passage of the stimulus package in February 2009. Tea Party Nation, a for-profit outfit best known for organizing a February 2010 National Tea Party Convention with Sarah Palin, has been scrutinized for its apparently inauthentic grassroots methods (Williamson et al. 2010). Likewise, the Tea Party Express, a program of the Republican “Our Country Deserves Better” PAC that has coordinated a series of nationwide bus tours and protests, has been criticized by some Tea Party activists for its overt ties to the GOP (Weigel 2009).

The TPP's own action alert, which called upon supporters to "take to the streets," anticipated that "the Senate will bring the Cap and Traitor bill to the floor on the sixth or seventh of July. We need to send a forceful message to the Senators that we will not tolerate passage of the [Waxman-Markey] act in the Senate" (TPP 2009).

On October 10, 2009—when the op-ed he co-authored with John Kerry ran in the *New York Times* under the headline "Yes We Can (Pass Climate Change Legislation)"—Graham became the Tea Party's most wanted cap-and-traitor. To a movement united most strongly by conservatism and antipathy toward President Obama (Abramowitz 2010), this headline was a call to arms. The local and national campaigns that followed collectively attacked Graham's support of cap-and-trade, belief in manmade climate change, willingness to collaborate with liberal lawmakers, and even his personal life. As Vogel recalls, the Senator was ridiculed for his alleged homosexuality and branded a "turncoat" and "traitor." The Tea Party also gave Graham a more mundane, yet far more damaging label—RINO.

To some hunters in South Carolina, Graham is considered a prized RINO, or Republican In Name Only. RINO Hunt is a Greenville-based organization aiming to oust RINOs and to more broadly "resist socialism, rebuild conservative government, and restore our Constitution" (RINO Hunt 2010b). The group is a founding member of the Upcountry Coalition of Conservative Organizations, which is part of the TPP national network and includes the state chapter of the influential AFP. Under the leadership of founder Harry Kibler, RINO Hunt targeted Graham as an incumbent RINO in part for his support of cap-and-trade legislation. "Our stand on cap-and-trade is quite simple,"

says Kibler. “We don't like it and believe it will destroy industry in the U.S.” (2010). The RINO Hunt website elaborates on this stance, referring to cap-and-trade as a “global warming energy tax” (RINO Hunt 2011) and “wealth redistribution scheme” (RINO Hunt 2010a). Beyond cap-and-trade, RINO Hunt dismisses climate change as “simply the new communist idea of controlling food, employment, housing and religious beliefs” (RINO Hunt 2009). “Today’s environmentalist was yesterday’s communist,” states a 2010 newsletter. “Like all God hating evil, Communism simply dwarfed into something more palatable: environmentalism” (RINO Hunt 2010c).

RINO Hunt’s opposition to cap-and-trade and condemnation of environmentalism are buttressed by climate change doubt. Kibler believes that climate change may be happening, but that it is “cyclical and not manmade” (Kibler 2011). Bill Allen, who is a member of both RINO Hunt and a Patriot Action Network subcommittee on climate change, takes a harder line: “global warming was a political hoax created by Mr. Gore and his friends” (Allen 2011). These views are extreme, yet consistent with trends within the national Tea Party movement. An October 2010 CBS/*New York Times* poll found that 53 percent of Tea Party supporters believe that global warming will have no serious effect at any time in the future, a statement with which just 15 percent of the general public agree (Broder 2010c).

The day after the Graham-Kerry proposal ran in the *New York Times*, Kibler parked his white Ford pick-up truck outside of a town hall meeting hosted by Graham in Greenville. As Graham’s constituents streamed into the auditorium, Kibler outfitted his truck bed with a bawdy effigy of the incumbent RINO—a pair of mannequin legs

clothed in men's slacks and dress shoes jutting out of a full-sized toilet. (Just one month earlier, at RINO Hunt's inaugural public event, Kibler had assembled a similar display under the banner "Flush Bob Inglis.") Inside the town hall, one man shouted, "You're a traitor, Lindsey Graham!" Another quipped, "How many non-compromisers are in the Senate?" And, in an allusion to Graham's supposed homosexuality, one constituent asked, "Why do you think it's necessary to get in bed with people like John Kerry?" (Anon. 2009). The unfounded personal attacks continued at public events, in online forums, and in mainstream conservative media.¹⁵ Meanwhile, well-coordinated campaigns against Graham's support of cap-and-trade intensified.

Between October 26 and October 28, AFP's "Hot Air Tour"—designed to "expose [the] hidden energy tax hike in cap-and-trade legislation"—descended upon South Carolina (AFP 2011f). AFP describes itself as "an organization of grassroots leaders who engage citizens in the name of limited government and free markets" and claims more than 1,600,000 activists (AFP 2011a). Along with sister organization FreedomWorks, AFP is one of several established industry-backed advocacy groups actively mobilizing the national Tea Party movement. Launched in 2008, well before the ascension of the Tea Party proper, the tour brought a carnival like atmosphere—complete with free rides in a 70-foot tall hot air balloon emblazoned with the words

¹⁵ In a March 2010 radio segment, Glenn Beck mocked Graham's support of climate change legislation: "He is just not going to carry the water for the Republican Party anymore. And as you all know, that water used to be a bucket of snow." Beck also derided Graham's very willingness to speak with Rahm Emanuel and dubbed him "Nancy Graham...kind of a cross between somebody with common sense and Nancy Pelosi" (Beck 2010). At a Greenville Tea Party rally, Americans for Legal Immigration founder William Gheen suggested that Graham's closeted homosexuality was allowing him to be manipulated by liberals: "Look I'm a tolerant person. I don't care about your private life, Lindsey. But as our U.S. Senator, I need to figure out why you're trying to sell out your own countrymen and I need to make sure you being gay isn't it" (Gheen 2010).

“Cap and trade means: lost jobs, higher taxes, less freedom”—to cities throughout the U.S.¹⁶ The tour’s stop in the palmetto state included four separate rallies, reportedly drawing up to 800 activists (AFP 2011k). Attendees signed petitions, placed phone calls to Graham’s office, and enjoyed rides in a hot air balloon bearing a banner “Senator Graham, Vote NO on Cap and Trade” (AFP 2011h). AFP coupled these events with an extensive email campaign and weeklong radio ad buy.

The Hot Air Tour primarily targeted Graham’s support of cap-and-trade, but also censured the Senator’s belief in manmade climate change and willingness to collaborate with liberal lawmakers. Event promotion material accused Graham of “join[ing] President Obama and Speaker Pelosi pushing a scheme that raises taxes on your gasoline, raise taxes on your home heating and cooling and kills jobs by the thousands with government rationing of our energy—all in the name of Al Gore’s Global Warming alarmism” (AFP 2011g). AFP was simultaneously promoting a “No Climate Tax Pledge” encouraging lawmakers to “oppose any legislation relating to climate change that includes a net increase in government revenue.” More than 500 elected officials have signed the pledge to date, including 29 GOP Senators, the entire House GOP Leadership, and House Tea Party Caucus founder Michele Bachmann (R-MN) (AFP 2011j). Days after the tour, AFP lauded a seemingly incongruous statement from

¹⁶ An alternate balloon involved in AFP’s Hot Air Tour read “Global warming alarmism: lost jobs, higher taxes, less freedom” (AFP 2011i). The Tour even went international, hosting protests at the UN Climate Change Conferences in Copenhagen and Cancun.

Graham's office that "the Senator is not supporting cap-and-trade at this point" (AFP 2011i).

Then, nearly six months later, FoxNews.com ran an article erroneously accusing Graham of proposing perhaps the only thing worse than cap-and-trade—a gas tax. The story, which was reportedly leaked by the White House to the conservative news outlet popular with Graham's constituents (Lizza 2010; Vogel 2011), portrayed the Obama Administration as defending the American consumer from Lindsey Graham's liberal taxes. The word "tax," which Vogel calls the "magic word" for Tea Party activists, was used 34 times in the original FoxNews.com posting (Lizza 2010). In response, American Solutions for Winning the Future, a group established by former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-GA), orchestrated a drive asking supporters to call Graham's office "and ask him not to introduce new gas taxes" (quoted in Lizza 2010). Yet another group headed by a former Republican House leader, Dick Armey's FreedomWorks had staged several campaigns in South Carolina, including a petition delivery and protest at Graham's Greenville office (FreedomWorks 2010a). On April 24, 2010, FreedomWorks held another series of coordinated rallies outside of Graham's six district offices designed to "send a resounding 'NO!' to Graham and make him think twice before he gets behind this bill next week" (FreedomWorks 2010b). Later that day—two days after America's 40th Earth Day—Graham withdrew from negotiations with Kerry and Lieberman, jeopardizing the Senate's best chance at passing comprehensive energy and climate change legislation.

MOTIVATED BY THE PARANOID STYLE

These Tea Party campaigns—which sapped the political courage of Lindsey Graham, demonized cap-and-trade, and spurred climate change skepticism—evinced the movement’s often-ignored assault on environmental regulation. The South Carolina experience also demonstrates the synergies between new local and national Tea Party groups and established, industry-backed free-market advocacy organizations. Fox News and the echo chamber foster these synergies by nurturing a shared and ostensibly radical identity. But this exploration of campaigns against Graham and the American Power Act does not fully explain the impetus behind the Tea Party’s antiregulatory agenda; it is a motivation best described as the enduring ideological battle against New Deal liberalism and Communism—or “the paranoid style in American politics” (Hofstadter 1964).

CNBC correspondent Rick Santelli is widely credited with sparking the national Tea Party movement.¹⁷ Reporting from the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange on February 19, 2009, Santelli lambasted the Obama Administration’s plan to help nine million Americans avoid foreclosure as “rewarding bad behavior” and challenged the administration to launch an online “referendum to see if we really want to subsidize the losers’ mortgages.” He then invited “capitalists” to a “Chicago Tea Party” and declared that he would “start organizing.” But it seems as though the organizing had already begun.

¹⁷ Some regard “anti-porkulus” protest organized by Seattle activist Keli Carender as sparking the Tea Party movement (Zernike 2010).

Dubbed the “shout heard ‘round the world,” an allusion to the Battle of Lexington and Concord’s “shot heard ‘round the world,” footage of Santelli’s rant quickly went viral. So quickly, in fact, that some began to question the spontaneity of the outburst (Ritholtz 2009). An existing conservative network loosely organized around blogs and social media like Twitter popularized the footage (Williamson et al. 2010). Just one day later, White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs was offering to educate Santelli about the mortgage plan over a cup of coffee—decaf (Shear 2009).

“This ad hoc rant,” explains TPP head Jenny Beth Martin, “was like lighting a match” (2011). A conservative base, unhinged by the enduring economic turmoil and the election of Barack Obama, fueled the fire (Parker and Barretto 2010). And a network of existing conservative organizations that gave rise to new Tea Party groups, fanned the flames. United under a banner of patriotic resistance—“Don’t Tread On Me”—the Tea Party movement began its steady march backward to a type of freedom best described as *laissez faire*.

The movement’s adopted imagery belies an ideological foundation rooted not in the American Revolution, but more recently in anti-New Deal liberalism and anti-Communism. The movement’s core principles—fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government, and free markets—are in essence a direct rebuff of the New Deal’s 3Rs: relief, recovery, and reform. In the wake of the Great Depression, newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt aimed to deliver “a new deal for the American people” through a progressive suite of policies that included the creation of regulatory bodies like the Securities Exchange Commission and welfare programs like Social Security. Through

programs like Civilian Conservation Corps, the New Deal emphasized responsible natural resource management and environmental stewardship (Henderson and Woolner 2005). The relative prosperity brought by the New Deal heralded an era of apparent “liberal consensus” defined by the primacy of Keynesian economics, legitimizing government intervention to correct free-market failings.

Yet as historian Kim Phillips-Fein and others have argued, this liberal consensus was never absolute. A coterie of influential businessmen, incensed by the New Deal’s regulation of commerce and redistribution of wealth, began a measured revolution that culminated in Reagan’s 1980 victory (Phillips-Fein 2010). The budding countermovement coalesced around libertarian ideals and controversial Austrian economics that venerated free enterprise and, therefore, despised regulation. Contemporary conservatives, as Brian Glenn and Steven Teles note, are more united by an enduring antipathy toward New Deal liberalism than by ideological consistency (Glenn and Teles 2008).

Evident in the language projected from the echo chamber, the threat of Communism helped galvanize elements of the conservative resurgence that eventually gave rise to the Tea Party. Charles Postel contends that the Tea Party has “tapped into fear and anger over potential shifts in political economy in order to form a grass-roots movement rooted in the traditions of the DuPonts and the anti-New Deal American Liberty League, Joseph McCarthy and the witch hunts, Robert Welch and the Birch Society, Barry Goldwater and the right wing Republicans of the post-war conservative movement” (Postel 2010). Similarly, the *New Yorker’s* Jane Mayer likens Tea Partiers to supporters of George Wallace, the radical anti-Communist, pro-segregation candidate of

the 1960s (Mayer 2011).¹⁸ The routine characterization of President Obama as a socialist, communist, or Nazi seen at Tea Party protests, online, and in mainstream media is further evidence of the movement's Cold War heritage.

Although the Tea Party's lineage may seem extreme, it is the heritage of mainstream conservatism. And the Tea Party's central antiregulatory rubric is consistent with the antiregulatory conservatism that dominated the Republican Party from 1980 to 2008 (Layzer forthcoming). Alan Abramowitz describes the Tea Party as "the natural outgrowth of the growing size and conservatism of the activist base of the Republican Party" (Abramowitz 2010). Despite attempts to reframe the movement as non-partisan, Tea Partiers overwhelmingly identify as—and vote for—Republicans (Quinnipiac 2010). Demographically similar to the public at large, the Tea Party is white, older, and middle class (Gallup 2010b). Tea Partiers hold views on social issues like same-sex marriage, abortion, and illegal immigration that are far more conservative than those of the general public (Pew 2011; Montopoli 2010). And the movement draws disproportionate support from evangelical Protestants (Pew 2011). A multiple regression analysis of select polling data found that Tea Party support correlated most strongly with conservatism and hostility toward President Obama (Abramowitz 2010). In other words, the Tea Party is indeed the Republican Party—just a stronger brew.

¹⁸ Representative Bob Inglis likened Tea Partiers with the anti-establishment Ross Perot voters of the 1990s (2011).

ENABLED BY THE KOCHTOPUS

The Tea Party is not only part of the Republican Party, but also part of a larger conservative network of entrenched free-market advocacy groups, think tanks, charitable foundations, industry lobbies, and conservative media outlets. Koch Industries, the fossil fuel and manufacturing giant led by brothers Charles and David Koch, is at the center of this network. Unlike other industry interests that simply fund external efforts to thwart costly new environmental regulations, the Koch brothers have established their own alliance of libertarian organizations to continuously protect free-market ideals—and their bottom line. This so-called Kochtopus (Mayer 2010) enabled the success of the Tea Party’s anti-cap-and-trade campaigns by channeling funding and ideology through its most successful libertarian ventures: AFP and the Cato Institute.

“My joke is that we’re the biggest company you’ve never heard of,” said David Koch (quoted in Weiss 2008). What began as an oil and natural gas processing and transportation business has grown into a manufacturing powerhouse that includes household brands like Lycra and Dixie. Koch Industries is the nation’s second-largest privately held company—and one of America’s top polluters. A March 2010 University of Massachusetts Amherst Political Economy Research Institute study ranked Koch Industries as the country’s tenth largest toxic polluter (PERI 2010). The conglomerate has struggled with compliance; in 2000, the EPA required Koch Industries to pay \$30 million, the largest civil fine ever imposed under a federal environmental law, for its culpability in more than 300 oil spills across six states (U.S. EPA 2000).

Charles and David Koch, who share the number five spot on the Forbes 400 Richest People in America List with a net worth of \$21.5 billion each, are major philanthropic supporters of the arts, sciences, and controversial free-market causes. The law allows for anonymous personal contributions, but the majority of the Koch's donations are made transparently through their foundations—namely the Charles G. Koch, David H. Koch, Claude R. Lambe Charitable Foundations—as well as the Koch Industries Inc. Political Action Committee (PAC). In an investigative piece in the *New Yorker*, Jane Mayer highlights the financial ties between Koch Industries and the antiregulatory current of the Tea Party, citing a Greenpeace report describing Koch Industries as a “kingpin of climate science denial” for trumping Exxon Mobile by donating \$24.9 million between 2005-2008 to so-called climate change denial groups. The Greenpeace report also noted that between January 2006 and December 2009 Koch Industries spent \$37.9 million on oil and gas lobbying and, since the 2006 election cycle, the Koch Industries PAC spent \$2.51 million on contributions to federal candidates—more than any other oil and gas sector PAC (Greenpeace 2010). In February 2011, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Koch Industries and its employees comprise the largest oil and gas contributor to members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee (Hamburger et al. 2011). In sum, the Kochs have crafted a giving strategy that allows them to deliver their antiregulatory message to the public, industry, and elected officials, potentially influencing nearly every stage of the policy making process.

Condemning the “Koch Plutocracy,” critics dismiss their political giving as blatant corporate self-interest exerting inequitable influence on the democratic process.

“These foundations give money to nonprofit organizations that do research and advocacy on issues that impact the profit margin of Koch Industries,” the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy reported in 2004 (quoted in Mayer). A blog called KochWatch.org denounces the “billionaire brothers corrupting democracy” (Koch Watch 2010) and the government watchdog Common Cause held an “Uncloaking the Kochs” event in January 2011 to protest the “billionaire’s caucus” annual fundraising event organized by Koch Industries (Common Cause 2011). That said, in the absence of widespread campaign finance reform, the Koch’s contributions are not just legal, but encouraged by the current system.¹⁹ Moreover, many close to the family believe that Charles and David Koch are motivated not by greed, but by ideological conviction. In fact the Koch’s father, Fred, was a prominent member of the ultraconservative, anti-communist John Birch Society beginning in the 1950s (Continetti 2011). As *New York* journalist Andrew Goldman (2011) succinctly stated, “If it’s bullshit, it’s bullshit [David] believes in.”

Charles Koch had been supporting existing conservative organizations—including the Heritage Foundation and Heartland Institute—then decided to establish his own free-market outfits, including the Cato Institute.²⁰ Regarded as the nation’s premier libertarian think tank, the Cato Institute has produced a slew of studies alleging that the extent of climate change has been exaggerated and mechanisms like cap-and-trade are ineffective and costly. One Cato commentary refers to the American Power Act, “the

¹⁹ In January 2010, the *Citizens United v Federal Election Committee* Supreme Court decision gave corporations unlimited political spending in candidate elections.

Senate's long-awaited cap-and-tax bill," dismissing it as "yet another scheme to make carbon-based energy so expensive that you won't use it" (Michaels 2010). Cato is one of the gears in what *Newsweek's* Sharon Begley dubbed the climate change "denial machine." "Since the late 1980s," explains Begley, "this well-coordinated, well-funded campaign by contrarian scientists, free-market think tanks and industry has created a paralyzing fog of doubt around climate change" (Begley 2007).

Since the hot, dry summer of 1988, when NASA scientist James Hansen's congressional testimony thrust climate change onto the public agenda, social scientists have been studying how social and political forces are framing global warming as an actionable social problem. More recently, some social scientists have begun to examine conservative countermovement efforts to debunk global warming as a social problem demanding legislative action. For example, in 2002, sociologists Riley Dunlap and Aaron McCright published the results of a thematic content analysis of studies posted on the websites of major conservative think tanks between 1990 and 1997. Their analysis identified three major counter-claims espoused in the available literature: (1) scientific evidence of global warming is weak, if not completely false, (2) global warming will have significant benefits if it occurs, and (3) proposed action to combat global warming would do more harm than good. Moreover, the content analysis revealed a clear condemnation of climate change policy: "In short, the conservative movement asserted that, while the science of global warming appears to be growing more and more uncertain, the harmful effects of global warming policy are becoming increasingly certain" (McCright et al. 2000). The study also emphasized the importance of skeptic and contrarian scientists,

conservative foundations, and think tanks like the Cato Institute in the effort to challenge or “non-problematize” global warming. In 2008, Dunlap joined forces with Peter Jacques and Mark Freeman examined the Heritage Foundation’s online database of policy experts and organizations, finding that 92 percent of environmentally skeptical books are linked to conservative think tanks and 90 percent of conservative think tanks addressing environmental issues promote skepticism. Moreover, the study concludes that environmental skepticism is a “key tactic” of the “elite-driven” anti-environmental countermovement coordinated by conservative think tanks (Dunlap et al. 2008).

In an effort to further this countermovement by bridging the gap between think tanks and the public, David Koch established Citizens for a Sound Economy (CSE) in 1984. Twenty years later, CSE split into two organizations: AFP, chaired by Koch, and FreedomWorks, which merged with Empower America to be led by Dick Armey. Koch equated this new grassroots venture to “a door-to-door sales force that some of the cosmetics organizations have.” “What we needed was a sales force that participated in political campaigns or town hall meetings, in rallies, to communicate to the public at large much of the information that these think tanks were creating,” said Koch (quoted in Continetti 2011).

In 1990, CSE waged its first public battle against cap-and-trade by opposing government plans to regulate sulfur dioxide. Through a spin-off group called Concerned Citizens for the Environment, CSE generated studies claiming that acid rain was a myth and that deregulation would yield environmental benefits (Fang 2010). Two years later, in a prelude to more extensive anti-cap-and-trade efforts, CSE launched a campaign against

the Clinton Administration's proposal for a Btu tax in 1993 that included print and television advertisements and raucous rallies. Following rallies in Oklahoma and Louisiana, where CSE released balloons representing the dollars families would purportedly pay under the tax, Senators David Boren (D-OK) and John Breaux abandoned support for the bill (Fang 2010). In its anti-American Power Act campaigns, AFP continued in the CSE tradition by synthesizing the studies of like-minded think tanks in an effort to espouse climate change skepticism and to denounce cap-and-trade as part of a larger antiregulatory philosophy.

CONCLUSION: PRESENT & ANTICIPATED CAMPAIGNS

On July 1, 2010—two months after surrendering the Senate's best hope to pass comprehensive energy and climate change legislation—the *New York Times Magazine* named Senator Lindsey Graham "This Year's Maverick." Given this timing, the honor seemed akin to a political purple heart. The escalating partisanship spurred by the Tea Party had made even the attempt to pass bipartisan legislation a valorous feat. In the interview, Graham spoke candidly about the climate bill debacle, recalling placing a phone call to Harry Reid accusing him of "shifting the legislative calendar to woo Hispanic voters in an uphill re-election struggle." (That uphill struggle, of course, was against Tea Party candidate Sharron Angle.) Graham also offered a critique of the movement that always seems to trip him when he tries to cross party lines: "The problem with the Tea Party, I think it's just unsustainable because they can never come up with a coherent vision for governing the country. It will die out" (Draper 2010).

When it comes to the environment, however, the Tea Party seems to have coalesced around one shared vision—opposition to cap-and-trade. In fact, after the collapse of climate change legislation in the Senate, cap-and-trade gained prominence on the Tea Party’s public agenda. The number two point on the Tea Party’s *Contract from America*, released in October 2010, is the imperative to reject cap-and-trade and “stop costly new regulations that would increase unemployment, raise consumer prices, and weaken the nation’s global competitiveness with virtually no impact on global temperatures” (Contract 2010).²¹ In Representative Michele Bachmann’s (R-MN) January 2011 Tea Party response to the State of the Union, she urged the president to “stop the EPA from imposing a job-destroying cap-and-trade system.” Recent calls to action from AFP and FreedomWorks echoed this language, describing EPA regulation as “a back-door cap-and-trade scheme” and encouraged Tea Partiers to advocate for legislation limiting the power of the Agency (AFP 2011b; FreedomWorks 2011c).

The only problem with these new anti-cap-and-trade campaigns is that the EPA had actually proposed a permit application process to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act—not a market based cap-and-trade system. The choice of Bachmann and others to use “cap-and-trade” instead of the catchy “cap-and-tax” or the more accurate “command-and-control” speaks to the phrase’s symbolic heft. “Cap-and-trade in conservative circles is widely considered a dirty phrase,” says Clean Air Watch’s Frank

²¹ This contract is described as a “grassroots-generated, crowd-sourced, bottom-up call for real economic conservative and good governance reform in Congress,” yet it was conceptualized in part by the same players that established the 1994 GOP *Contract with America*, including Dick Armey and former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-GA) (Vogel and Bar 2010).

O'Donnell, “right up there with abortion on demand” (quoted in Geman 2010). Thanks largely to Tea Party campaigns, “cap-and-trade” has become a buzzword—divorced from its original definition and imbued with new partisan significance. “In this Darth Vader public relations that the energy industry has been engaged in,” said communications expert James Hoggan, “the idea is to find the message that works, not the one that’s true” (quoted in Oldham 2010).

The Tea Party is now attempting to dismantle the Northeast’s ten-state Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), America’s flagship cap-and-trade program regulating greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector. At an estimated household cost of 28 to 68 cents per month (Quinton 2011), RGGI has raised \$789.2 million—80 percent of which has been invested in programs to improve energy efficiency, deploy clean technologies, and assist low-income ratepayers (RGGI Inc. 2011). According to a February 2011 RGGI Inc. report, every dollar invested in energy efficiency and renewable energy programs yields three to four dollars in consumer benefits (RGGI Inc. 2011). Yet groups like AFP have deployed the same antiregulatory rhetoric to condemn the program as a threat to both economic prosperity and individual liberty.

Thanks in part to AFP-sponsored automated phone calls, on February 23, 2011, the New Hampshire House voted by a two-to-one margin to withdraw from RGGI (McDermott 2011). As the Senate debates the bill, AFP is airing a radio advertisement stating that failure to abandon RGGI will result in “higher taxes, lost jobs, and less freedom...it’s time to pull the plug on RGGI” (AFP 2011d). AFP has run the same radio advertisement in New Jersey, where the state chapter is managing a comprehensive anti-

RGGI effort that includes television advertisement, “Taxpayer Action Seminars to educate citizens about the RGGI cap-and-trade scheme,” and a petition urging lawmakers to “rescue New Jersey from cap-and-trade energy taxes” by supporting state legislation to withdraw from the initiative (AFP 2011e). AFP has also staged anti-RGGI rallies in New York, suggesting that the group has targeted the three states that made the controversial decision to divert RGGI revenues to cover budget gaps (Love 2010).²² Recognizing that in the absence of federal action, climate battles will be fought at the state and regional levels, AFP leadership has described the New Hampshire House vote as “one giant leap forward” in the national crusade against cap-and-trade (Kerpen and Lewandowski 2011). The American Legislative Exchange Council, a Koch-funded non-profit promoting free-market environmentalism, also offers bill templates to state legislators considering withdrawing from regional greenhouse gas initiatives (Greenpeace 2011).

Thus, the Tea Party’s strategy for engaging in the larger public dialogue about climate change is perhaps best captured by Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises’s primary rule: “the first job of an economist is to tell governments what they cannot do” (Mises 2011). Playing the role of the free-market economist, the Tea Party emphatically told the government that it cannot pass cap-and-trade legislation—and now it is telling the government that it cannot regulate greenhouse gasses under the Clean Air Act, nor can it continue to operate regional greenhouse gas initiatives. Future proposals to price

²² Republican lawmakers in Delaware and Maine have also proposed bills calling for their states withdraw from RGGI (State of Delaware 2011, State of Maine 2011).

carbon or otherwise limit emissions will undoubtedly be met with obstructionist, anti-regulatory fervor justified by climate change doubt. Even if protests subside, the Tea Party's antiregulatory ethos is likely to continue as part of the rightward shifting Republican Party.

The future of the Tea Party is uncertain and several factors suggest that the wave of populist fervor has indeed crested. An April 2011 Gallup poll reported the Tea Party's highest un-favorability rating, as 47 percent of Americans hold a negative view of the movement (Gallup 2011). Although the Tea Party catalyzed a historic Republican sweep of the House in the 2010 mid-term elections, the GOP may struggle to elect a presidential candidate to rival President Obama. Moreover, it is unclear how the anti-incumbent movement would even respond to a Republican president—or to a sunnier economy.

Since the emergence of the Tea Party—which coincided with the recession—climate change negotiations have halted, opinion on cap-and-trade has declined, and climate change skepticism has increased dramatically. However, this tax day, the Tea Party did not rally in Washington. No one brandished signs like “Cap & Trade = Tax & Enslave,” “Global Warming is a Socialist Scam,” or “Humans First.” Instead, 5,000 young environmentalists, participating in the Power Shift 2011 protest, rallied before the White House and demanded that President Obama make corporate polluters pay.

DISCUSSION

Bob Inglis, Lindsey Graham's cautionary tale, is now a visiting fellow at Harvard's Institute of Politics where he leads weekly discussions about the future of energy policy. Inglis continues to champion a revenue-neutral carbon tax despite the likelihood that his former constituents, many of whom do not believe in global warming and, therefore, question the motivation for pricing carbon, may never warm to the concept. Although he disagrees with them, Inglis is sympathetic to Tea Partiers' concerns: "These people reject climate change science and all cause for action, but it comes from a sense that I'm worried about this month's paycheck and this month's mortgage" (Inglis 2011). From Inglis's perspective, the Tea Party is a direct product of the Great Recession and climate change legislation will likely not be passed in an unstable economy. "There will be no action on climate change until the economy improves and the Tea Party subsides," said Inglis. "These two elements are contemporaneous—the Tea Party is a manifestation of dislocation in the economy" (2011).

Unfortunately the economy has been slow to recover and, thanks to the dual reach of the echo chamber and denial machine, climate change doubt within the Tea Party is very much, as John Broder describes, an "article of faith" (2010c). At least anecdotally, this zeal does not appear to be tempered by the more liberal climate of Massachusetts. According to Christen Varley, founder of the Greater Boston Tea Party, "I think the goose is cooked on global warming. I think enough people are skeptical at this point, especially with the expose last year with the changing of the numbers and the changing of the reports" (2011). However, Varley suggests that if environmentalists ditch

their moralistic tone, there may be opportunities to collaborate with members of the Tea Party on ecological conservation and energy efficiency efforts, for example. “I don’t believe in climate change or global warming or whatever you’re calling it these days,” she says, “but I understand, as a conservative, the value of conserving resources” (2011).

There are, of course, opportunities for the environmental movement to counter mobilize against the Tea Party. At the Greater Boston Tea Party’s tax day rally on Boston Common, counter protesters from unions and women’s groups nearly outnumbered the Tea Partiers. One woman’s sign—“Tea Party Tools of Billionaires and Big Business— suggests that the public is making the connection between Koch Industries and inadequate environmental regulation. Environmentalists should take a page from the Tea Party’s populist playbook and mobilize in support of passing comprehensive energy and climate change legislation. If a negative uprising can drain a senator’s political courage, perhaps a positive one can cultivate it.

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