

Climate Power: U.S. Sen. Johnson casts doubt on climate science, while Lt. Gov. Barnes highlights pro-climate record and plans to help Wisconsinites

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MILWAUKEE, Wis. – Tonight, during the first debate in Wisconsin’s Senate race, the differences between Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes and Senator Ron Johnson were crystal clear. Johnson once again sowed doubt about the reality of climate change, while Lieutenant Governor Barnes provided solutions to address the climate crisis, lower energy costs for Wisconsin residents, and create good-paying manufacturing jobs in the booming clean energy sector.

Senator Johnson has a record of denying the facts when it’s convenient for him. Here is a fact check of some of his most outlandish comments tonight:

- **JOHNSON:** “The climate has always changed, always will change, so I don’t deny climate change. The question is ‘Can you really do anything about it?’”
- **REALITY:** Apparently Senator Johnson thinks he knows more than the overwhelming majority of the scientific community. Climate change is real and it is driven by fossil fuel emissions. Experts agree that cutting fossil fuel emissions will slow climate change, yet Johnson has time and time again voted to protect Big Oil while blocking investments in clean energy.
- **JOHNSON:** “Eighty percent of our energy comes from fossil fuels right now and that’s not going to change any time soon because wind and solar are not

reliable - they make our grid very unreliable.”

- **REALITY:** This is a classic Republican talking point, but that doesn't make it true - just ask the families who have kept the lights on during extreme weather that hobbled the grid. Recently, when Hurricane Ian left more than 2.5 million Floridians without power, a community of 2,000 homes in Punta Gorda powered by 100% solar energy [never lost power](#). There are many more examples of renewable energy remaining online while fossil fuels failed, from [Puerto Rico](#) to [Texas](#) and more.
- **JOHNSON:** “The reason you're paying now more than \$4 at the pump is because of the Democrats' war on fossil fuels.”
- **REALITY:** No matter how many times Johnson and his allies repeat this lie, it is still not true. Big Oil executives and their shareholders continue raking in eye-popping profits, while working people pay the price at the pump. Energy costs as a whole are not rising - costs for energy sources that are reliant on oil and gas are rising. **Clean energy sources are getting cheaper every day. By 2029, domestic solar and wind could become the cheapest energy source in the world, [costing less than \\$5 per megawatt hour](#).** Yet, Senator Johnson has repeatedly voted to block investments in clean energy.
- **JOHNSON:** “If you want to have lower gas prices, we need to be energy independent.”
- **REALITY:** He's right, but misses the mark - we cannot truly be energy independent while remaining reliant on fossil fuels. According to the head of the International Energy Agency, [extreme volatility](#) in energy markets will present a continued risk unless investment in clean power is tripled in the next decade. Unlike oil, clean and renewable energy sources like wind and solar energy will never run out and that means they will provide a [secure and stable](#) energy supply long into the future.

While Johnson spread disinformation to deflect from his record of climate denial and inaction, Barnes presented voters with clear solutions for how he plans to tackle the climate crisis, lower energy costs, and expand clean energy jobs in Wisconsin.

- **BARNES:** “The climate crisis is already here. It's impacting places all over the country, all over the globe. What we need to do is reduce carbon emissions

and what we also need to do is move towards a clean energy economy and make sure Wisconsin is in the driver seat.”

- Barnes has a record of climate action. As lieutenant governor, he chaired the Governor’s Task Force on Climate Change, which brought together a diverse coalition of farmers, environmental advocates, Indigenous leaders, and business executives to produce 55 [concrete strategies](#) for how Wisconsin can begin to address the climate crisis.
- **BARNES:** “The problem is our reliance on fossil fuels in the first place. We need to be more energy independent. We need to do more to generate renewable energy in this country, specifically right here in Wisconsin [...] We need to hold [the fossil fuel industry] accountable for using inflation as a smokescreen to jack up prices on the American people. And the Senator has received hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign support from the fossil fuel industry and that is why he is going to put their interests over your pocket book.”
 - While Senator Johnson has taken \$800,933 from Big Oil, Barnes [signed](#) the “No Fossil Fuel Money Pledge” in 2018 and again for his 2022 Senate run. Barnes has also [called out Big Oil](#) for deceiving the public with their climate lies. On tonight’s debate stage, it was clear that Barnes is the only candidate ready to stand up to greedy fossil fuel executives and protect working folks.
- BARNES: “Clean water, safe drinking water is an issue in so many parts of the state. It’s one of the unfortunate realities that brings people together. This is something that we should come to respect in the most civilized and the most wealthy nation on the entire planet, but it’s not the reality.”
- Tonight, Barnes highlighted his track record of protecting Wisconsin’s water resources, saying, “I have spent my time in the office of Lieutenant Governor working on clean water issues. In fact in 2019, the Governor declared it the year of clean drinking water. We’ve issued a number of grants but we need help and support from the federal government.”

Wisconsin voters are concerned about the climate crisis and want leaders at every level to do more to address this crisis.

- [61%](#) of Wisconsin likely voters are somewhat or very concerned about climate change.

- [65%](#) of Wisconsin likely voters would like to see Wisconsin produce more energy from clean energy sources.
- [65%](#) of Wisconsin likely voters support the Inflation Reduction Act.
- [79%](#) of Wisconsin Democrats say they are very concerned about climate change, the highest of all issues presented.