

# *J.D. Vance Is an Oil Booster and Doubter of Human-Caused Climate Change*

He once said society had a climate problem but changed his position sharply while seeking Donald Trump's endorsement in his Senate race.

 Listen to this article · 5:08 min [Learn more](#)



**By Lisa Friedman**

Reporting from Washington

July 15, 2024

**Sign up for the On Politics newsletter.** Your guide to the 2024 elections.  
[Get it sent to your inbox.](#)

Senator J.D. Vance, Republican of Ohio, is a strong supporter of the oil and gas industry, opposes solar power and electric vehicles, and has said climate change is not a threat.

It wasn't always that way.

Mr. Vance, a fierce critic of Mr. Trump before becoming one of his most loyal MAGA supporters, also appears to have undergone an evolution on the issue of climate change. As recently as 2020, Mr. Vance said in a speech at Ohio State University that “we have a climate problem in our society.” He praised solar energy and he called natural gas an improvement over dirtier forms of energy, but not “the sort of thing that’s gonna take us to a clean energy future.”

Fast forward to 2022. As Mr. Vance sought Mr. Trump's endorsement for his bid for the Senate, his positions on climate change took a sharp turn.

“I'm skeptical of the idea that climate change is caused purely by man,” Mr. Vance told the American Leadership Forum that year.

He acknowledged that the climate was changing but said that humans had no role in the changes. “It's been changing, as others pointed out, it's been changing for millennia,” Mr. Vance said.

(Scientists have conclusively determined that human activity, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, is the dominant reason the planet is at its warmest in recorded history.)

Referring to environmentalists, Mr. Vance said, if “they think climate change is caused by carbon emissions, then why is their solution to scream about it at the top of their lungs, send a ton of our jobs to China, and then manufacture these ridiculous ugly windmills all over Ohio farms that don’t produce enough electricity to run a cellphone on?”

Ohio ranks sixth in the country in gas production and is the eighth-largest consumer of coal, which accounts for about a quarter of the state’s electricity generation while gas makes up about 46 percent. Wind and solar power account for less than 4 percent of electricity in Ohio, according to the state’s Public Utilities Commission.

Mr. Vance has celebrated the technology of hydraulic fracturing, commonly called fracking, to help extract vast gas reserves in Ohio. Many environmental activists oppose fracking because the technique, which involves pumping water, sand and chemicals at high pressure into underground shale formations, can pollute the groundwater.

Last year Mr. Vance wrote an opinion essay saying Ohioans “are lucky to live on top of the Utica Shale oil and gas basin,” a reservoir that contains about 38 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and praised techniques like hydraulic fracturing that he said “have allowed us to unleash these abundant natural resources.”

Mr. Vance criticized the Biden administration for “doing everything it can to subsidize alternative energy sources and demonize our nation’s most reliable sources of power” and accused the administration of “wanton harassment of fossil fuel companies, to the detriment of the American people.”

The United States pumped more crude oil than any country in history last year and is the world’s biggest exporter of liquefied natural gas.

Mr. Vance has attacked the Inflation Reduction Act, a 2022 law that Democrats passed without Republican votes and that has become the centerpiece of President Biden’s climate agenda. The law injects at least \$370 billion over a decade in incentives for wind, solar and other clean energy.

“It’s dumb, does nothing for the environment and will make us all poorer,” he wrote on social media during his 2022 campaign for the Senate.

Ohio has seen more than \$12 billion in clean energy investment since the law passed, according to Atlas Public Policy, a policy and data research firm. That includes Honda and LG committing more than \$5 billion to electric vehicle battery manufacturing and factory

retooling across the state.

Last year Mr. Vance introduced legislation to repeal federal tax credits for electric vehicles that were created under the I.R.A. His measure called for a \$7,500 tax credit specifically for American-made gas or diesel-powered vehicles.

“If we’re subsidizing anything, it ought to be Ohio workers, not the green energy daydreams that are offshoring their jobs to China,” Mr. Vance said at the time.

Since he was elected, Mr. Vance has also cosponsored legislation to repeal an I.R.A. program designed to curb leaks of methane, a highly potent greenhouse gas; undo an Environmental Protection Agency rule setting strict emissions standards for cars and light trucks; and to impose a \$20,000 tariff on all Chinese vehicles imported into the U.S. None of those measures have become law.

He has received \$340,289 from the oil and gas industry in campaign contributions since 2019, according to Open Secrets, a campaign finance watchdog site.

**Lisa Friedman** is a Times reporter who writes about how governments are addressing climate change and the effects of those policies on communities. [More about Lisa Friedman](#)

**Climate Forward** There’s an ongoing crisis — and tons of news. Our newsletter keeps you up to date. [Get it in your inbox.](#)