

Talking About Climate In The Michigan U.S. Senate Race

Why Michigan Voters Need To Hear About Climate

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WHY CLIMATE ACTION IS A WINNING ISSUE IN MICHIGAN

The politics of climate have changed and embracing bold climate action is a winning message. Climate change is a defining issue for key voting blocs –younger voters, voters of color, and suburban women strongly believe we need bold, climate action and a more just and equitable economy now. Voters also don't buy the Republican climate deniers' lies about climate action and are tired of putting oil and gas CEOs profits ahead of working families.

The climate crisis is here. Scientists around the globe are warning us if we don't heed the advice of experts and take action to address climate change, it may be too late to avoid catastrophic consequences. In Michigan, the impacts of climate change will [mean stronger storms, more flooding, and hotter temperatures that decrease winter ice](#) on the Great Lakes. The state's agriculture, it's economy and people's health will all be hurt:

- Climate change is estimated to [cost](#) Michigan \$5,178,650,000 a year by the year 2100.
- In the last decade, Michigan [witnessed](#) three severe flooding events that caused a total of at least \$12 billion in damages and 5 deaths.
- Climate change will also harm the state's [agriculture](#), [outdoor recreation](#) and tourism industries.
- In 2019, seventeen counties in Michigan received an F grade for ozone pollution, and Detroit was [ranked](#) the 10th worst city in America for particle pollution.
- 13 water systems across the state have [tested positive](#) for lead, and communities in Flint remain without access to clean drinking water due to lead contamination.

That is why it is critical to have a robust discussion about how we tackle the climate crisis and fight for environmental justice. Strong majorities of Michiganders (and American voters) believe climate change is happening now and are worried about its effects. [59% of Michiganders](#) believe both the President and Congress should do more to address climate change, as do [71% of American voters](#).

CANDIDATE BACKGROUNDS

SENATOR GARY PETERS

Senator Gary Peters was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2014. Prior, he served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 9th and later the 14th districts. Peters served as a Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Navy, as Commissioner of the Michigan Lottery, and as a member of the Michigan State Senate.

Senator Gary Peters believes in climate science, [stating that](#) the threat of climate change caused largely by human activity was an “undeniable fact.”

In March of 2019, Peters [called on](#) the Senate to pass legislation to ween the U.S. from dependence on fossil fuels, and in April of 2019, Peters said he [supported](#) parts of the Green New Deal. Peters [criticized](#) Trump’s withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, [arguing](#) that climate change was “a significant issue that can only be addressed through international cooperation.”

Senator Peters has a proven record of standing up for Michigan communities impacted by flooding. Whether its introducing legislation to [support](#) Great Lakes communities facing rising water levels and costal erosion or pushing for infrastructure [funding](#) for Michigan communities [impacted](#) by flash flooding, [climate change](#) has been center stage in Peters’ [calls for action](#).

Senator Peters [knows](#) the havoc the climate crisis is already [wrecking](#) on Michigan farmers, and as Senator he has [joined](#) bi-partisan efforts to [protect](#) Michigan’s agriculture industry, fighting for funding and assistance for [crop growers](#), livestock producers and the [forestry industry](#).

For [almost two decades](#), Peters has fought to protect the health of the Great Lakes and Michigan’s drinking water supply. He has [bolstered](#) funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, increased [restrictions](#) on oil and gas pipelines, secured [funding](#) for PFAS cleanup projects, and led the fight to grant emergency aid to Flint following the lead water crisis.

Gary Peters recognizes the [economic](#) and [national security](#) benefits to tackling the climate crisis, and as Senator, he has championed investments in [clean energy](#), green technology [research and development](#), and in electric vehicles.

JOHN JAMES

John James is a former U.S. Army helicopter pilot who now runs his family's warehousing and logistics business in Detroit. James ran for Senate in 2018 against Sen. Debbie Stabenow, losing by 6%. James has acknowledged the existence of climate change but has doubted the science on the matter and questioned the impact of human activity on the changing climate.

In 2018, James cast doubt on the scientific consensus that human action directly impacts on climate change. James said it didn't matter whether climate change was "all the way man made or partially man made or earth or whatever." He has [said](#) that the jury was "still out" on the human impact on the "natural phenomenon" of global warming, and [claimed](#) the long-proven impact of climate change was still being figured out and should be taken on a "case by case" basis. In 2018, James also insisted that "federal government overreach" [was not the answer](#) to tackling the climate crisis.

James said he would have [voted against](#) legislation that included funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, was [critical](#) of the EPA, and [supported](#) President Trump's decision to pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement, which James called a "bad deal" that held the U.S. to a different standard.

CONFRONTING THE CRISIS

IF YOU SAY ONE THING

The climate crisis is here, and it's already hurting our economy, our health, and our security. We cannot afford to wait any longer to act.

KEY MESSAGE

The climate crisis is here. We see it in the strange and severe weather that happens more frequently and causes more damage to our communities. This isn't opinion – it's fact. It's also fact that we are running out of time to act. Scientists, experts, and economists say that if we don't take steps now to combat climate change, the damage may be irreversible. Unlike John James, who remains in denial about the impact humans have on climate change, Senator Gary Peters acknowledges the threat of climate change is caused largely by human activity – and he has acted to tackle the crisis and to bolster climate science.

COMPARE RECORDS

- Senator Gary Peters believes in climate science, [stating that](#) the threat of climate change caused largely by human activity was an “undeniable fact.”
- In a November 2019 [interview](#) with Detroit Today, Peters said: “there is a significant cost to the taxpayers with climate change.”
- In a June 2019 tweet, Peters [wrote](#): “Taxpayers will continue to pay expensive and unprecedented recovery costs if we don't adapt & address climate change.”
- In March of 2019, Peters [called on](#) the Senate to pass legislation to ween the U.S. from dependence on fossil fuels, and in April of 2019, Peters said he [supported](#) parts of the Green New Deal.
- In 2020, Peters won [passage](#) of bipartisan legislation to help scientists better predict weather events in space that could impact Earth.
- In 2018, James [insisted](#) that “federal overreach” was “not the answer” to tackling the climate crisis.
- In 2018, James cast doubt on the scientific consensus that human action has on climate change. James said it didn't matter whether climate change was “all the way man made or partially man made or earth or whatever.” He [said](#) the jury was “still out” on human impact on the “natural phenomenon” of global warming, and

[claimed](#) the long-proven impact of climate change was still being figured out and should be taken on a “case by case” basis.

GET THE FACTS

- [65% of Michiganders](#) believe in climate change, and [57% of the state's residents](#) are worried about climate change.
- [59% of Michiganders](#) believe both the President and Congress should do more to address climate change. [55% of Michiganders](#) believe their Governor and local officials should do more.
- In the past decade, Michigan has [experienced](#) 16 climate-related disasters responsible for a total of \$79 billion in damages.
- Climate change will [cost](#) Michigan \$5,178,650,000 a year by the year 2100.
- In the last decade, Michigan [witnessed](#) three severe flooding events that caused a total of at least \$12 billion in damages and 5 deaths.
- In 2017, agriculture [generated](#) over \$104.7 billion in gross state product and employed 805,000 workers, or 17% of Michigan's workforce.
 - Climate change is [projected](#) to cause a 1.58% loss in crop yields in Michigan, including a 19% loss in grains.

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

IF YOU SAY ONE THING

We have a responsibility to leave a better world for our children and grandchildren, and supporting the U.S.'s withdrawal from landmark climate agreements would threaten our nation's role as a global leader on climate and clean energy.

KEY MESSAGE

We have a responsibility to leave a better world for our children and grandchildren, but we've fallen behind and let other nations displace us. This threatens our economy and national security. There are ambitious investments we should make that will help us meet the scale of this challenge and lead the world in building an equitable, clean energy economy.

COMPARE RECORDS

- Senator Gary Peters [criticized](#) Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, arguing the withdrawal sent "a very wrong signal from a foreign policy perspective": "This basically unravels what has been an awful lot of work getting a global consensus together to deal with climate change. We have entered into this agreement with nations around the world, I think it's important for those nations to understand that America stands behind its commitments, it stands behind its treaties. It sends a very wrong signal from a foreign policy perspective."
- Peters [said](#) withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement showed "a total lack of American leadership."
- Peters [argued](#) climate change was "a significant issue that can only be addressed through international cooperation."
- In 2019, Peters co-sponsored the International Climate Accountability Act which would have required the U.S. to honor its commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement.
- Two years after Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement, Peters [noted](#) "climate change has continued to warm the Great Lakes faster than other regions," causing more flood damage, more days with extreme heat, and harm to fishing, tourism and agriculture industries.

- Peters knows that electric vehicles represent the future of the auto industry (the backbone of the U.S. economy), which we can't afford to cede to China ([the world's largest auto buyer](#)), and Europe ([the world leader in EV investment](#)).
 - Peters won [passage](#) of the Vehicle Innovation Act to support research and development of new and innovative advanced vehicle technologies. Thanks to the legislation, six projects in Michigan secured a total of \$25.9 million in funding from the Department of Energy.
 - Peters won [passage](#) of legislation that updated policies to help federal agencies purchase more electric vehicles.
- John James [supported](#) Trump's decision to pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement, which he called a "bad deal" that held the United States to a different standard.

GET THE FACTS

- The U.S. is already falling behind as other nations, including China and countries in Europe, move forward on clean energy jobs of the future. China is [already](#) the world's largest producer of solar panels, and last year European nations [installed](#) more solar infrastructure than the U.S.
- Electric vehicles represent the future of the auto industry (the backbone of the U.S. economy), which we can't afford to cede to China ([the world's largest auto buyer](#)), and Europe ([the world leader in EV investment](#)).
 - Led by government climate policy, Europe [attracted](#) \$71 billion in electric vehicles investment in 2019, outpacing China and the U.S.
 - The Chinese government, which had [already invested](#) \$60 billion into electric vehicles before the pandemic, is placing electric vehicles at [the center](#) of their coronavirus recovery package with extensions to tax breaks for electric vehicles and an investment in growing the number of charging stations by tenfold, all with an eye to [increase](#) electric vehicles from 5% of the market to 25% in the next 5 years.
 - Researchers at CSIS [warn](#) that if China takes too much of a lead, it will threaten the U.S. ability to compete in the growing market.
- At the start of the Trump administration, exiting the Paris Climate Agreement was a high priority on the wish lists of coal baron [Bob Murray](#) and the oil billionaire [Koch brothers](#).

- Trump [cherry picked](#) jobs data from a faulty study to justify leaving the Paris Agreement.
- Remaining in the Paris Climate Agreement would actually [save](#) the U.S. over half a trillion dollars annually, while doing nothing on climate change comes at an annual cost of roughly \$698 billion.
- [Researchers found](#) that honoring the Paris Agreement would create 24 million jobs around the world by 2030 by growing the renewables sector and related industries.
 - The study also found that if left unchecked, [climate change will destroy jobs](#).
- Major employers, including GE, Disney, and Apple [disagreed](#) with Trump's 2017 decision to withdraw the U.S. from the agreement, arguing that staying in the would create jobs by spurring investment, increasing American competitiveness in and access to international markets, encouraging innovation, and reducing business risk associated with climate change.
 - In late 2019, they joined with the Chair of the International Committee of AFL-CIO in a [letter](#) re-asserting their support.
- At least 290 cities and counties, 10 states, and 2,275 businesses have said they are “still in” and [pledged to stick to the goals](#) of the Paris agreement.
 - 7 cities, including Ann Arbor, Detroit and Grand Rapids, are “[still in.](#)”
 - 26 Michigan businesses, including the Dow Chemical Company, Herman Miller, and Steelcase, are “[still in.](#)”
 - 6 Michigan higher education institutions, including the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, are “[still in.](#)”

FLOODING

IF YOU SAY ONE THING

Cycles of drought and flooding have turned the Great Lakes into the “erratic high seas of the Midwest.” Last year, high water levels damaged property along the lakeshore and flooded tourist hot spots. This year, the Army Corps of Engineers predicts it will get worse.

KEY MESSAGE

Senator Peters has a proven record of standing up for Michigan communities impacted by flooding. Whether its introducing legislation to support Great Lakes communities facing rising water levels and costal erosion or pushing for infrastructure funding for Mid-Michigan communities impacted by flash flooding, climate change has been center stage in Peters' calls for action. John James, on the other hand, has offered no solutions to the crisis facing Michiganders, instead offering platitudes to those hit by catastrophic flooding.

COMPARE RECORDS

- In 2019, Peters [announced](#) \$19.2 million in funding for the Michigan Department of Transportation to repair damage stemming from flash flooding across the Upper Peninsula in June 2018.
- Peters [recognizes](#) the flooding threat facing costal Michigan communities is driven by climate change: “Coastal communities in Michigan are facing a crisis. As climate changes, you’re going to see all of these systemic changes in what we’ll see with more significant weather events. We know we have to prepare.”
- Peters has [stressed](#) that addressing climate change is essential to preserving the Great Lakes and surrounding communities: “This flooding is just the beginning. If we want to preserve our Great Lakes and the communities that surround them, we have to address climate change.”
 - In an interview on MSNBC following flooding in Midland, Peters [said](#): “And as the climate continues to change we know that we’re going to have more severe storms, and those storms are going to be of a greater magnitude, they’re going to be increasingly severe.”

- In March 2020, Peters [introduced](#) the STORM Act to [provide](#) \$300 million in funding support for local communities along the Great Lakes that are facing rising water levels, coastal erosion, and flooding.
 - On the legislation, Peters [said](#): “The Great Lakes are expected to see record-high water levels in the coming months, conditions that put homes, roads, business and quite frankly, whole towns at risk of flooding damage. These are serious challenges that threaten the economy, the security and the wellbeing of communities across our state. Many of these communities simply don't have the resources to combat this problem on their own.”
- In May 2020 following flooding in Mid-Michigan, Peters [introduced](#) legislation to boost disaster response assistance for state and local governments. The bill sought to eliminate the cost-share payments required of state and local governments who are seeking federal assistance from major disaster declarations in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - On the legislation, Peters [said](#): “Communities in Michigan and across the country are facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, and they need the full resources and support the federal government can help provide as we tackle this emergency together. That's why I have been calling on the Administration to make this change and relieve this burden on state and local governments. On top of the public health and economic crisis we're in, communities in Mid-Michigan are being evacuated from their homes by historic flooding. Michiganders need help, and this legislation will ensure that every community will be able to get the federal aid they need to address terrible disasters like these.”
- In August 2020, Peters [introduced](#) the FLOODS Act to establish a National Integrated Flood Information System. The system would improve NOAA's forecasting and communication of flood, tornado and hurricane events.
 - On the legislation, Peters [said](#): “Unexpected severe flooding has too often upended the lives of families and hard-working men and women across the U.S., including in Michigan. This bipartisan legislation would help protect families and small businesses along high-risk shorelines and other communities by modernizing flood forecasts to provide more timely, actionable information, and I look forward to building additional support for this bill.”
- Rather than acknowledging the impact of climate change on flooding events in Michigan, James [offered](#) thoughts and prayers to Michiganders devastated by the catastrophic Midland floods: “My heart breaks for the thousands of Michiganders forced from their homes yesterday because of historic flooding in Central

Michigan. Please join me in praying for them this morning. You will not be left behind. Together, we will recover & rebuild.”

GET THE FACTS

- Scientists have [linked](#) an increase in heavy downpours to climate change.
- Cycles of drought and flooding have turned the Great Lakes into the “[erratic high seas of the Midwest](#).” Last year, high water levels damaged property along the lakeshore and [flooded tourist hot spots](#). This year, the Army Corps of Engineers [predicts](#) it will get worse.
- Currently, 340,000 people are [at risk](#) of flooding in Michigan.
- In the last decade, Michigan [witnessed](#) three severe flooding events that caused a total of at least \$12 billion in damages and 5 deaths.
- In [May 2020](#), floodwaters caused two dams to fail, threatening a [Dow Chemical Co. plant](#) after the area around Midland received 3-4 inches of rain in a very short period of time.
- Twenty toxic sites in Michigan are [at risk](#) of flooding and releasing contaminants due to climate change.
- Scientists say climate change [played a hand](#) in the deadly 2019 Midwest floods:
 - Flooding on the Missouri river and Upper Midwest in [March of 2019](#) cost \$10.8 billion and caused 3 deaths.
 - In May 2019, a State of Emergency was [declared](#) after flooding affecting 3,000 homes in Wayne County.
 - In June 2019, a State of Emergency was [declared](#) after flooding washed away roads in Tuscola County.
- High water on the Great Lakes has flooded beaches and marinas, [impacting tourism](#).
 - [South Haven](#) recently spent \$16 million on damages along the Lake Michigan Coastline and nearly had to cancel its July 4th fireworks in 2019 due to beach erosion.
- Recreational fishing is a \$3 billion industry in the Great Lakes, plus an additional \$1 billion in commercial fishing, and an Enbridge oil pipeline project [threatens](#) to destroy it.

- [A 2018 report](#) found that “coastal erosion, higher storm surge, and heavier precipitation events threaten our oceans and coasts.” Specifically, in the Midwest “many communities are expected to suffer financial impacts as chronic high-tide flooding leads to higher costs and lower property values.”
- Due to the climate crisis, water levels in the Great Lakes [are currently](#) between 2 and 3 feet above their long-term averages, and scientists [are not sure](#) if the Great Lakes water levels will ever recede again, as they historically have.
 - Lakes Michigan and Huron [rose](#) 6.1 feet in the past 6 years. Lakes Michigan and Huron has [broken](#) their monthly high water mark records most months for the past two years.
- Driven by climate change, the Great Lakes Region [saw](#) a nearly 10% rise in precipitation between 1901 and 2015, compared to a 4% across the entire U.S.
- Climate change is making waves that eat away at beaches [bigger and more frequent](#), while warming waters are freezing less often, [exposing beaches](#) to more intense winter waves. Experts [say there](#) is “a tremendous amount of infrastructure that is vulnerable” to shoreline erosion.

AGRICULTURE

IF YOU SAY ONE THING

In four of the last ten years, Michigan farmers experienced crop losses due to extreme cold, increased flooding and even a winter polar vortex. Climate change will only exacerbate the losses faced by the state's agriculture industry as heavy downpours bring floods and extreme weather throws planting schedules out of whack.

KEY MESSAGE

Agriculture is Michigan's second largest industry, supporting 1 in 4 jobs in the state. Senator Peters knows the havoc the climate crisis is already wrecking on Michigan farmers as increased flooding, more erratic weather patterns, and heavy downpours damage crops, spread disease and threaten livelihoods. Peters has joined bi-partisan efforts to protect Michigan's agriculture industry, fighting for funding and assistance for crop growers, livestock producers and the forestry industry.

COMPARE RECORDS

- Senator Gary Peters [co-sponsored](#) the Timber Innovation Act of 2017, which directed the USDA to establish programs to advance and improve environmentally-friendly wood building construction, support Michigan's forestry industry and encourage good stewardship of forestry resources.
- Senator Gary Peters was a [member](#) of the Senate Working Forests Caucus, which works "to support the sustainability of forests and the benefits they provide, including economic growth in rural communities and environmental benefits such as carbon absorption."
- In June 2019, Peters [penned](#) a letter to the USDA urging the administration to help farmers impacted by delayed crop planting due to historic rainfall.
- In October 2019, Peters [introduced](#) legislation to ensure the USDA provided payment forbearance and a suspension of farm loan foreclosures in response to record farm debt levels and extreme weather experienced across Michigan.
- Peters [recognizes](#) the effects of climate change are already hitting Michigan's agriculture industry, through "increased flooding, damaged crops, spreading of disease" that [have](#) "devastating consequences for farmers."

GET THE FACTS

- Agriculture is the [second largest](#) industry in Michigan, supporting 1 in 4 jobs.
- In 2017, agriculture [generated](#) over \$104.7 billion in gross state product and employed 805,000 workers, or 17% of Michigan's workforce.
- In 2017, over 20 million acres of forests [supported](#) the state's \$17.8 billion forest products industry and employed over 87,000 people.
- Climate change is [projected](#) to cause a 1.58% loss in crop yields in Michigan, including a 19% loss in grains.
- In 2010, 2012, 2017 and 2019, Michigan farmers experienced crop losses due to extreme cold, increased flooding and even a winter polar vortex:
 - In 2010, tens of millions of dollars was [lost](#) in the state's fruit crops [due to](#) freezing spring temperatures, with growers suffering extensive and sometimes total crop losses.
 - In 2012, hard freezes wiped out crops across Michigan, [marking](#) the worst year in recorded history for the state's fruit growers. More than 90 percent of the state's tart cherry crop was lost when freezing weather followed an unusually warm spring. Michigan apple growers saw the [worst](#) harvest since 1945.
 - The USDA placed the state's crop losses for apples, asparagus, blueberries, cherries, peaches and grapes at [\\$223.5 million](#) in 2012.
 - In 2017, freezing spring temperatures [threatened](#) fruit crops, while heavy rain and cold soil temperatures delayed the crop planting process for corn and soybeans.
 - In 2019, a polar vortex followed by unseasonably warm temperatures [wiped out](#) fruit crops in western Michigan. 30 to 40% of the apple crop, 60 to 70% of the pear crop, and 50% of the state's sweet cherry crop were [destroyed](#).
 - In 2019, heavy rain [delayed](#) the harvest of crops including corn, soybeans and wheat. 2019 was the third straight wet spring that threw corn and soybean farming into chaos, with planting of these crops falling historically late and threatening yields for the Fall.

**CLIMATE
POWER
2020**

- Alongside extreme weather events, Michigan crops have been threatened by invasive insects. In [2011](#) and again [this year](#), invasive flies posed damage to a range of crops including apples, grapes, cherries and blueberries.
- The state's sugar maple trees, which produce maple syrup, are [predicted](#) to come under stress from warmer, drier growing seasons.
- As spring rains become heavier and storm violence increases, there will be an [increase](#) in nutrient runoff from farm fields, a key driver of algae blooms in places like western Lake Erie.

CLEAN WATER

IF YOU SAY ONE THING

Ensuring the Great Lakes are healthy is paramount to Michigan's culture, economy and way of life. Michigan has serious long-term issue with clean water – evidenced in lead contamination and PFAS pollution leaving communities like Flint without safe drinking water.

KEY MESSAGE

Senator Gary Peters has long supported the Great Lakes and clean water issues. In contrast, John James said he would have voted against a spending bill that restored \$300 million in funding for the initiative and has criticized the EPA, the federal agency doing the most to combat PFAS contamination.

COMPARE RECORDS

- As a State Senator back in 2011, Gary Peters [pushed for](#) legislation placing a moratorium on oil and gas drilling under the Great Lakes.
- In 2016, Peters won [approval](#) of legislation requiring greater safety measures for pipelines in the Great Lakes region.
 - Peters [pushed for](#) inclusion of a measure designating the Great Lakes as a so-called high-consequence area, requiring companies operating pipelines in the area to meet tougher standards and have specific plans for responding to environmental threats posed by spills.
- In 2019, Peters [secured](#) an additional \$9 million in funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). Since its inception in 2010, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has provided more than \$762 million for 880 projects across Michigan.
 - On the legislation, Peters [said](#): “For Michiganders, the Great Lakes are simply part of our DNA. But protecting them needs to be a national priority. One of my top focuses is ensuring we can protect the Great Lakes for future generations. I was pleased to lead this effort on a bipartisan basis to secure this funding. With this additional funding, more projects in Michigan will have

the resources to restore habitats, combat invasive species and clean up our waterways.”

- The GLRI [protected](#) the Great Lakes ecosystem around Michigan and was an economic catalyst for the state, [returning](#) \$3.35 for every dollar spent on the program and creating or supporting thousands of jobs.
- In November 2019, Peters [introduced](#) legislation to protect firefighters from PFAS chemical exposure by directing federal agencies to shift away from using firefighting foams and protective equipment containing PFAS.
 - The [legislation](#) was signed into law in December 2019 as part of the National Defense Authorization Act, and included several other provisions related to PFAS detection, co-ordination, and monitoring.
- In February 2020, Peters helped secure [\\$13.5 million in funding](#) for PFAS cleanup projects at the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Oscoda.
 - In May 2020, Peters [criticized](#) the Air Force for using money allocated to clean up contaminants at the Wurtsmith Air Force Base to conduct further study rather than cleanup projects in the area.
- In 2016, Peters [lead](#) the fight to pass \$170 million in emergency aid for Flint following the lead water crisis.
- James said he [disagreed](#) with Trump’s decision to cut funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, yet in 2018 he said he would have [voted against](#) a spending bill that [restored](#) \$300 million in funding for the initiative.
- In July 2018, James was [critical](#) of the EPA, the federal agency doing the most to combat PFAS contamination, claiming the agency represented “massive government bureaucratic overreach.”
 - The EPA was [responsible](#) for discovering the PFAS threat, [regulating](#) PFAS chemicals, [improving](#) PFAS contamination testing, and [authoring](#) a PFAS Action Plan to respond to contaminations.

GET THE FACTS

- An estimated 40 million people [rely](#) on the Great Lakes for drinking water.

- The Great Lakes have been experiencing blooms of toxic algae as a result of pollution driven by heavy rains running off into water sources and feeding the algae that [thrives in warming water temperatures](#).
- Heavier spring rains, and more violent storms, will [contribute](#) to nutrient runoff from farm fields, a key driver of algae blooms in places like western Lake Erie.
 - In August 2014, an outbreak of microcystin, a toxic blue-green algae, led to a ["do not drink the water" advisory for more than 400,000 residents](#) in Toledo and southeast Michigan for a weekend.
- In May 2020, scientists and activists [raised concern](#) that floodwaters that overwhelmed two dams in Midland may have swept away progress on cleaning up an EPA superfund site [polluted](#) with dioxins from a Dow Chemical Co. plant.
 - Floodwaters may have damaged spots that had been repaired or swept pollutants farther downstream from two polluted rivers and floodplains in the area.
 - Twenty toxic sites in Michigan are [at risk](#) of flooding and releasing contaminants due to climate change.
- The Flint lead water crisis became a rallying cry for environmental justice and clean water access:
 - In 2014 when switching the city's water supply from Lake Huron to the Flint River, [officials failed](#) to add corrosion controls to the tap water, which allowed lead and other chemicals to leach from the old, worn pipes into the drinking supply.
 - Months after the water system's switch, [testing showed](#) increased and alarming levels of lead in the blood of some Flint children.
 - Nearly 30,000 children [were exposed](#) to toxic lead.
 - Neurological damage to the children of Flint is [overwhelming](#) the city's public school system, where the rate of children who qualify for special needs instruction has doubled in recent years.
 - Six years on, 15% of Flint's lead pipes [have still not](#) been replaced.
 - Some communities in Flint still [do not have](#) access to clean water.
- The lead crisis goes beyond Flint – 13 water systems across Michigan recently [tested positive](#) for lead, and the [rate of lead exposure](#) among children rose 28% in Detroit in 2016.

- Michigan has more [PFAS sites](#) than any other state in the nation, impacting clean drinking water for more than [1.5 million](#) residents:
 - As of August 2019, nearly 100 contamination sites had been [identified](#) in the state, and around 20% of the state's population were drinking from water systems [containing](#) PFAS levels above the EPA's advisory level.
 - The list of systems with known PFAS levels include major systems that draw water from the Great Lakes like [Saginaw](#), [Grand Rapids](#) and [Wyoming](#), as well as groundwater systems like [Kalamazoo](#) and [Ann Arbor](#), which draws primarily from the Huron River.
 - In August 2020, Michigan [implemented](#) some of the strictest rules in the nation limiting chemical contaminants in drinking water supplies.
 - PFAS chemicals were [linked to](#) kidney and testicular cancer, hypertension, and other diseases.

CLEAN ENERGY JOBS

IF YOU SAY ONE THING

Michigan's renewable energy industry creates good-paying jobs across the state, including in the auto-industry.

KEY MESSAGE

Michigan is already a leader in clean energy jobs, ranking 5th in the nation for clean energy employment and 2nd for clean energy jobs in rural areas in 2019. This is an industry that pays higher hourly wages than most other jobs while providing cheap, pollution-free power. As Senator, Gary Peters has championed investments in clean energy, green technology research and development, and the development of electric vehicles.

COMPARE RECORDS

- In his first race for the U.S. Senate in [2014](#), Peters made confronting the climate crisis and growing the economy through clean energy jobs central to his campaign: “My way of dealing with it is from an economic standpoint, this is great for our economy, and by the way, this is also great for the environment.”
- In a 2019 speech on the Senate floor, Peters [called](#) for “a policy that ensures renewable energy is produced here in America, and done in a way that creates jobs and strengthens our national security.”
- Peters won [passage](#) of the Vehicle Innovation Act to support research and development of new and innovative advanced vehicle technologies. Thanks to the legislation, six projects in Michigan secured a total of \$25.9 million in funding from the Department of Energy.
- Peters won [passage](#) of legislation that updated policies to help federal agencies purchase more electric vehicles.
- Peters [recognizes](#) the opportunity that solutions to the climate crisis present for Michigan's economy: “We have a tremendous opportunity to both innovate our economy and preserve our environment, but we have to act now.”
- Peters has [stressed](#) that the local nature of clean energy jobs insulates them from being outsourced: “It's a common conservative refrain that regulations aimed at addressing climate change can hamstring industry. But Peters argues that

combating global warming can actually 'heat up' the economy by providing well-paying clean energy jobs on American soil. 'Dealing with climate change would actually be good for our economy,' he said. 'If we're creating jobs to install solar or to build wind farms, those are local jobs that can't be outsourced. You gotta have people local.'"

- In 2019, Peters and Senator Stabenow forced a [vote](#) on a resolution to block the EPA from replacing the Obama-era Clean Power Plan.

GET THE FACTS

- The Clean Power Plan would have created [560,000 new clean energy jobs](#).
- The state was [ranked](#) 5th for clean energy employment in 2019, with the sector providing 125,365 jobs.
- In 2019, Michigan was ranked 2nd for clean energy jobs in [rural areas](#), with the sector providing 24,954 jobs.
- In 2019, there were [more jobs](#) in renewable energy than there were in the state's fossil fuel sector.
- In 2019, Michigan was home to over 3,800 jobs in the [solar industry](#) and 4,001 to 5,000 direct jobs in the [wind industry](#).
- Hourly wages for clean energy jobs [exceed](#) national averages by 8 to 19 percent, the clean energy economy offers more [opportunities](#) for low and middle-skilled workers than the national economy, and educational barriers to entry are [lower](#) in clean energy jobs, even in high paying positions.
- Most clean energy jobs are [local by nature](#), and clean energy companies support a range of secondary jobs in their local areas.
- Wind energy is [cheaper](#) than natural gas, and in 2018, the [sector alone](#) paid \$1 billion to state and local governments and private landowners in tax and lease payments, and supported a supply chain of 500 factories in 42 states employing 24,000 workers.
- Clean energy companies [hire](#) a greater percentage of veterans than the national average, with veterans [filling](#) around 10 percent of the nation's advanced clean energy jobs. Clean energy also [employs](#) more veterans than the oil and gas industry.

- The renewable energy sector is [more diverse](#) than the workforce overall: it is less white, employs more workers who identify as Hispanic or Latinx, and employs 3 to 5 times more workers who identify as two or more races than the national average.
- Clean energy jobs provide a [long-proven](#) path to stability and reintegration for formerly incarcerated citizens, who were [unemployed](#) at a rate of 27 percent in 2018 and face over 45,000 [barriers](#) to reintegration.
- Electric vehicles represent the future of the auto industry (the backbone of the U.S. economy), which we can't afford to cede to China ([the world's largest auto buyer](#)), and Europe ([the world leader in EV investment](#)).
- Led by government climate policy, Europe [attracted](#) \$71 billion in electric vehicles investment in 2019, outpacing China and the U.S.
- The Chinese government, which had [already invested](#) \$60 billion into electric vehicles before the pandemic, is placing electric vehicles at [the center](#) of their coronavirus recovery package with extensions to tax breaks for electric vehicles and an investment in growing the number of charging stations by tenfold, all with an eye to [increase](#) electric vehicles from 5% of the market to 25% in the next 5 years.
- Researchers at CSIS [warn](#) that if China takes too much of a lead, it will threaten the U.S. ability to compete in the growing market.
 - The U.S. hit 1 million [electric vehicles sales](#) in 2018.

CLIMATE CHANGE TOUCHES EVERY BIG POLITICAL ISSUE IN 2020

You don't have to wait for a question about climate change to highlight how climate change touches nearly every major issue that might come up in a political debate. Here are some examples of how you can talk about climate change in a variety of different contexts.

THE ECONOMY

Ignoring The Climate Crisis Will Harm Michigan's Economy:

- In the past decade, Michigan has [experienced](#) 16 climate-related disasters responsible for a total of \$79 billion in damages.
- Climate change will [cost](#) Michigan \$5,178,650,000 a year by the year 2100.
- In 2017, agriculture [generated](#) over \$104.7 billion in gross state product and employed 805,000 workers, or 17% of Michigan's workforce.
 - Climate change is [projected](#) to cause a 1.58% loss in crop yields in Michigan, including a 19% loss in grains.
- The costs of dealing with rising water levels on the Great Lakes is already impacting Michigan Cities.
 - [South Haven](#) recently spent \$16 million on damages along the Lake Michigan Coastline and nearly had to cancel its July 4th fireworks in 2019 due to beach erosion.
 - Governor Whitmer [announced](#) a plan to devote \$40 million in next year's budget to help cities cover damages related to climate change.
 - High water on the Great Lakes has flooded beaches and marinas, [impacting tourism](#).
- Outdoor recreation in Michigan [supports](#) 232,000 jobs and \$26.6 billion in consumer spending.
 - Recreational fishing is a [\\$3 billion industry](#) in the Great Lakes, plus an [additional](#) \$1 billion in commercial fishing, and an Enbridge oil pipeline project [threatens](#) to destroy it.
- Trump's clean cars rollback will [cost](#) Michiganders over \$745 million per year.

Investing In Clean Energy Future Means Good Jobs For Michigan:

- In 2019, there were [more jobs](#) in renewable electricity generation than in fossil fuels.
- In 2019, Michigan was [ranked](#) 5th for clean energy employment, with 125,365 jobs, and 2nd for clean energy jobs in [rural areas](#), with 24,954 jobs.
- In 2019, Michigan was home to over 3,800 jobs in the [solar industry](#) and 4,001 to 5,000 direct jobs in the [wind industry](#).

JUSTICE & CIVIL RIGHTS

Environmental Justice Is Racial Justice:

- In 2019, seventeen counties in Michigan received an F grade for ozone pollution, and Detroit was [ranked](#) the 10th worst city in America for particle pollution.
 - Ozone has been [linked](#) to asthma, and Black children are [four times](#) more likely to be admitted to the hospital and [ten times](#) more likely to die from asthma.
- The [most polluted](#) ZIP code in Michigan, 48217, is 81% Black. Four of the five most polluting refineries in Michigan are within five miles of this ZIP code.
- Environmental racism has deep roots in Michigan, where the water crisis in Flint sparked many Americans' awareness of the issue.
 - Six years on, 15 percent of Flint's lead pipes [have still not](#) been replaced.
 - Some communities in Flint still [do not have](#) access to clean water.
 - Nearly 30,000 children [were exposed](#) to toxic lead.
 - Neurological damage to the children of Flint is [overwhelming](#) the city's public school system, where the rate of children who qualify for special needs instruction has doubled in recent years.
- The lead crisis goes beyond Flint – 13 water systems across Michigan recently [tested positive](#) for lead, and the [rate of lead exposure](#) among children rose 28% in Detroit in 2016.
- Michigan tribes have led the [fight to shut down](#) the Enbridge Line 5 pipeline which has spilled at least 29 times and over 1 million tons of oil into the Great Lakes.

HEALTH CARE

Climate Change And Fossil Fuel Pollutants Give People Pre-Existing Conditions And Make Them More Vulnerable To COVID-19:

- New research on air pollution has found that [burning fossil fuel](#) causes 230,000 premature deaths in the US every year.
- Scientists and health experts from 35 academic institutions and United Nations agencies said that [children will suffer from a rise in infectious diseases, malnutrition and air pollution](#) if global warming continues on the current trajectory.
- The [American Lung Association](#) warns that pollution from vehicle exhaust and power plants can cause lung cancer, heart disease, and asthma attacks.
- Soot air pollution (PM2.5) causes severe health problems and it [increased by 5.5 percent](#) on average across the country between 2016 and 2018, after decreasing nearly 25 percent over the previous seven years.
 - Soot air pollution (PM2.5) [from power plants and vehicle exhaust](#) has been [linked to higher death rates](#) from COVID-19

NATIONAL SECURITY

Climate Change Is A National Security Threat, Both Abroad And Right Here At Home:

- [National security experts](#) and the [Department of Defense](#) have published reports warning that climate change puts our national security at risk by destabilizing conflict zones.
- Our ability to respond to conflicts is also being impacted. A [2019 report](#) from the Department of Defense found that climate change is already [threatening mission-critical bases](#).
 - Michigan's Selfridge Air National Guard Base (ANGB) is [impacted](#) by current and potential future wildfires.

FOREIGN POLICY & TRADE

The U.S. Risks Falling Behind On Emerging Clean Energy Industries While The Rest Of The World Is Making Investments In Their Future:

- The U.S. is already falling behind to China and Europe. In 2017, [nearly half](#) of the world's new renewable energy investment came from China, and the nation is the [world's largest producer](#) of solar panels, wind turbines, batteries and electric vehicles. In 2019, the U.S. added 13 GW of [solar installations](#), while Europe added 16.7 and the previous year, China added 44 GW.
- Electric vehicles represent the future of the auto industry (the backbone of the U.S. economy), which we can't afford to cede to China ([the world's largest auto buyer](#)), and Europe ([the world leader in EV investment](#)).
 - Led by government climate policy, Europe [attracted](#) \$71 billion in electric vehicles investment in 2019, outpacing China and the U.S.
 - The Chinese government, which had [already invested](#) \$60 billion into electric vehicles before the pandemic, is placing electric vehicles at [the center](#) of their coronavirus recovery package with extensions to tax breaks for electric vehicles and an investment in growing the number of charging stations by tenfold, all with an eye to [increase](#) electric vehicles from 5% of the market to 25% in the next 5 years.
 - Researchers at CSIS [warn](#) that if China takes too much of a lead, it will threaten the U.S. ability to compete in the growing market.

IMMIGRATION

Unchecked Climate Change Will Only Increase Pressure On Our Borders:

- Poverty and violence in Central America are major factors [driving migration](#) to the United States.
- Drought and disasters driven by climate change will [continue to exacerbate](#) poor economic conditions that leave people in desperate situations with no options.
- [A recent scientific paper](#) predicts that the parts of the globe that best support human life and crops will shift more in the next 50 years than they have in the last 6,000 years, sparking [mass migrations](#) as people move to escape heat, hunger, and political chaos.