



“A stunning year in climate science”

Dr. Joseph Romm, who writes an award-winning blog, ClimateProgress.org, reviews the most important recent scientific presentations and studies in his post, “A stunning year in climate science reveals that human civilization is on the precipice.”

He writes: “Any one of these would be cause for action—and combined they vindicate the final sentence of Elizabeth Kolbert’s *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*: ‘It may seem impossible to imagine that a technologically advanced society could choose, in essence, to destroy itself, but that is what we are now in the process of doing.’”

Romm considers [the year’s top news story](#) to be that climate change appears to be responsible for a 40% decline in the ocean’s plant plankton, which produces half the world’s oxygen and forms the foundation for the entire marine food chain.

Romm also describes recent studies about methane stores destabilizing and venting, global droughts increasing, sea levels rising faster than predicted, soils emitting CO2, temperatures rising, and—one of the most under-reported potentially catastrophic climate impacts—oceans acidifying.

The “Climate Zombie Caucus”

No one should underestimate the impact of what ThinkProgress calls the “[Climate Zombie Caucus](#)” of the 112th Congress—those who have explicitly rejected the scientific consensus among 98% of climate scientists that the planet faces a grave threat from climate change caused by human activity.

None of the incoming Republican freshman in the Senate or House accept the scientific consensus that climate change is an immediate threat; 76% of all Republican Senators and 52% of all House Republicans deny or publicly question the science of global warming. Seven of the new members of the House Energy & Environment Subcommittee belong in the Caucus. Incoming Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) said last year, “The idea that carbon dioxide is a carcinogen, that it is harmful to our environment, is almost comical.”

When most members of one party in both houses of the U.S. Congress reject a scientific consensus among 98% of scientists in a critical field, it shows the world how far America has fallen from the days it led the world in science and technology—and how fast and

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Did you know?

- Estimated unfunded liability for state and local pension plans[\\$3.5 trillion](#)
- Extra interest Arizona will pay over 20-year lease-back of state buildings after selling them for \$735 million up-front[\\$400 million](#)
- Number of safety citations since mid-2008 at Massey Kentucky coal mine just shut down.....[almost 2,000](#)
- Estimated 2002-08 drop in Syria’s total water resources, due to drought and mismanagement[50%](#)
- Average annual cost of Ireland’s austerity measures for typical middle-class family earning \$67,000 a year.....[\\$5,800](#)
- Drop in consumption of plastic shopping bags in China since stores were required to charge for the bags.....[50%](#)



Swedish city powers itself on waste

The city of Kristianstad in Southern Sweden uses waste—farm, slaughterhouse, food, and flooring factory leftovers—to make biogas that it uses to heat homes, make electricity, and fuel vehicles. Cars and buses run on biogas, which sells for 20% less than



gasoline, dispensed from a network of pumping stations. Remote areas heat homes with tiny wood pellets delivered by hoses from tanker trucks that used to deliver heating oil.

In the last 10 years, the city has [cut its fossil fuel use in half](#) and reduced its CO2 emissions by a quarter. It plans to be free of fossil fuels and have zero carbon emissions by 2020. Government financed much of the start-up costs, but the payback includes a 50% drop in municipal buildings' heating costs as well as many new green jobs.

In 1991, when Sweden became the first country to tax CO2 emissions, the city started its search for fossil fuel substitutes. The U.S. has barely begun to tap the potential of biogas systems from urban and farm waste, but some states and companies are considering new investments.

Cancun keeps UN climate process alive

No one expected Cancun to produce a binding, comprehensive agreement. It didn't. But it produced enough minor steps and vague pledges to keep the UN multilateral process alive until next year in Durban, South Africa. Even as time runs out for the planet, the UN talks provide an important forum for the search for common ground. Progress will come mostly through unilateral measures as countries, often led by their business sectors, slowly convert to clean energy in their own self-interest.

“Brave Thinkers”

We recommend “Brave Thinkers,” *The Atlantic's* second annual assessment of “the year’s most intrepid and original thinking” in its November issue. Some of the thinkers are well-known, like Elon Musk and Elizabeth Warren.

The others include John Hantz, who wants to invest \$30 million to reimagine Detroit by converting 30,000 acres of its abandoned property into farmland. With an estimated 1/3 of its parcels vacant—40 square miles—the Motor City could become a leader in the urban farm movement.

Lonnie Johnson, a Ben Franklin-type inventor who created the Super Soaker squirt gun, has invented a new way to convert heat to electricity that may revolutionize solar-energy conversion and cut the cost of solar power in half. Tom Sullivan, owner of a hardwood-flooring chain, plans to use solar-powered electrolyzers in his stores' parking lots as the foundation for a chain of solar-powered hydrogen fueling stations that will allow people to drive “on nothing but sunshine and water.”

The list goes on. Good thinking and good reading.

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The “Climate Zombie Caucus”

much further it is likely to fall. It's a trend that appears in many disguises, including the recent international standardized test scores that show [U.S. students rank 23rd globally in science](#), while Shanghai students rank first.

An October [Asia Sentinel article](#) by the *Sentinel's* founding editor, [John Berthelsen](#), led with the subheading, “A rising tide of willful ignorance threatens the foundations of the United States.”

The U.S. must face the cost to its national security and global stature if it can't reverse its odd new aversion to science. The lesson isn't lost on the rest of the world.



Health insurance CEOs' losses are citizens' gains

New rule: health insurers must spend more of customers' insurance premiums on health care.



Starting in 2011, the new healthcare reform law will require health insurance companies to spend at least 80% of every premium dollar on health care. Insurers who don't meet the new standard

will have to pay customer rebates.

An estimated 9 million Americans could receive such rebates in 2012. Many insurers now allocate more than 20% of every premium dollar to profits, executive compensation, marketing, etc. About 45% of people who have individually purchased health insurance have plans that don't meet the new standards, according to federal officials.

Last year, [most health insurance company CEOs made \\$10-\\$18 million](#), "considerably higher than the pay of most CEOs in the S&P 500 Index," and UnitedHealth Group CEO Stephen Hemsley reportedly made \$106 million.

Former cold war warriors in film



In the documentary, "[The Nuclear Tipping Point](#)," created by the [Nuclear Threat Initiative](#) (and moderated by actor Michael Douglas), Henry Kissinger and George Shultz joined with other former cold warriors who were once big proponents of using nuclear weapons to deter U.S. enemies but now are trying to prod the world into protecting itself from nuclear terrorists.

Senate dysfunction and the nuclear treaty

When the last START treaty expired about a year ago, the U.S. lost its 20-year old ability to inspect Russia's nuclear sites and control the spread of "loose nukes" to keep them from falling into the hands of terrorists.

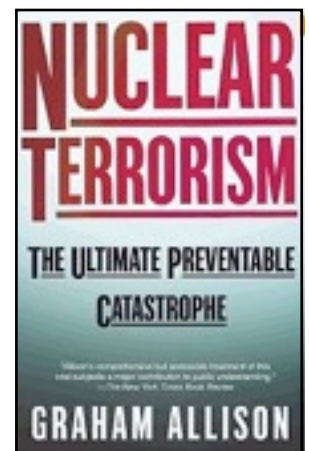
About ten days ago, a [Washington Post op-ed by five former Republican Secretaries of State](#), including Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, and James Baker III, urged the Senate to ratify the new START treaty signed by President Obama and Russian President Medvedev; explained how the treaty would reduce the risk of nuclear catastrophe and enhance national security; and urged the Senate not to let the treaty fall victim to partisan politics.

A remarkable host of other military and national defense heavyweights also have come forward to press for ratification of the treaty.

As we go to press, it is unclear whether the Senate will vote on the START treaty before the end of its lame-duck session. Until pending tax issues are resolved, the Senate minority refuses to take up other issues. Senator Jon Kyl (R-Ariz) is the lead Republican negotiator on both the treaty and the tax cut negotiations with the Administration, including [the estate tax deal](#) that is extraordinarily favorable to the very wealthiest estates.

Kicking the treaty over to the 112th Congress would signal a continuing irresponsible failure to make nuclear terrorism an urgent national priority, as is clear from Graham Allison's book, [Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe](#).

[Call your Senators](#) to tell them to make ratification of the treaty a priority.





“Untellable truths”

Complaints about President Obama’s leadership are ricocheting through the internet echo chamber and the [political-industrial complex](#).

Some critics on the left focus on his willingness to compromise in the fight against greed and injustice, while others focus more on his failure to become a Great Communicator. The latter group is particularly frustrated by the “kind of political cognitive dissonance” so well described in [Hendrik Hertzberg’s New Yorker piece](#), “Electoral Dissonance.”



Both groups of critics will like George Lakoff’s recent *HuffPost* piece, “[Untellable Truths](#),” which offers advice to progressives on how to wield discourse-changing power, saying “Presidents cannot do it alone.”

Lakoff writes: “Progressives have surrendered public political discourse to conservatives, and with it the key to the nation’s future.... Democrats need to unite behind a simple set of moral principles: (1) Empathy—Americans care about each other. (2) Responsibility, both personal and social. We have to act on that care. (3) The ethic of excellence. We have to make ourselves better so we can make our families, our communities, our country, and the world better. Government has special missions: to protect and empower our citizens to have at least the necessities.”

America’s confidence deficit

“You can’t get the right answer if you ask the wrong question,” Robert Borsage writes in “[America’s confidence deficit](#).” Enough debate about “how we best enforce austerity.” The right question is “what is the new strategy, the new foundation for an economy that offers hope for rebuilding America’s economic vitality in the competitive global market place?”

“Top Ten” energy-saving products

To find the most energy-efficient products on the market, visit [TopTen.info](#) for information about products in Europe and China or “[Top Ten USA](#).” Search by product category, including cars, household, lamps, office equipment, consumer electronics, and building components.



Find the politics in your pocketbook

It’s easier than ever to align your political beliefs and spending habits. Use the new [Checking Influence Tool](#) to see the political and lobbying expenditures of the businesses you frequent.

The Sunlight Foundation, a non-partisan nonprofit dedicated to making government transparent and accountable, created the tool for citizens to use on any web page that shows their spending transactions, such as a banking site, credit card statement, or Mint.com.

Two other non-partisan websites, [MapLight.org](#) and [OpenSecrets.org](#), also offer excellent tools for tracking corporate political expenditures and the influence of money on public policy.



Growth in virtual events market

Prediction: There’s less business travel in your future. The virtual event market, which [doubled](#) in size between 2008 and 2009, is likely to grow to \$18.6 billion a year in five years, according to Market Research Media.



Jim Cusumano on “Conscious Capitalism”

There are five challenges that “threaten human sustainability via economic and social collapse,” writes **Academy Member James A. Cusumano, Ph.D.**, in “[Conscious Capitalism: Preventing Economic Crisis](#),” the seventh article in his latest series in the European [Leaders Magazine](#).

Those five challenges, in Jim’s declining order of priority are: (1) non-transparent political and corporate governance, (2) energy-climate insecurity, (3) nuclear terrorism and war, (4) global pollution, and (5) overpopulation.

Jim makes the case that “if business, as the most powerful force on the planet, does not lead the way to addressing these challenges, it is unlikely that anyone will, or could do so effectively.” For business to successfully assume “responsibility for the whole” (the World Business Academy’s mission), business leaders will need to make the transition from ego-based leadership to “conscious leadership,” a “serving relationship with others that inspires them to grow and reach their innate human potential”—which also increases their contribution to their company and makes the world a better place.

The two central hallmarks of conscious leadership are “awareness of your true self within and the world around you, and responsibility for ‘the whole’.... Being conscious means being fully aware, totally engaged, and personally responsible for the impact you have on the world, as well as the impact the world has on you.”

Jim draws on the books and teachings of [Academy Fellow Lance Secretan](#), a well-known author, speaker, and consultant on the subject of conscious and inspiring leadership. Lance has been voted one of the “top 21 speakers for the 21st century” by *Successful Meetings* magazine. [Read the full article](#).

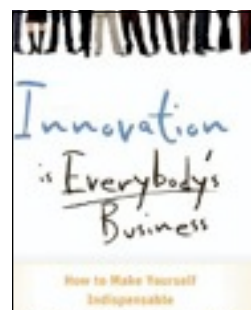
Innovation is Everybody’s Business

Academy Member Robert Tucker’s latest book, [Innovation is Everybody’s Business: How to Make Yourself Indispensable in Today’s Hypercompetitive World](#), will find a wide audience.

Most books about innovation focus on helping organizations or CEOs succeed. This one focuses on how frontline employees can find greater satisfaction in their working life and transform themselves from “competent employee/manager” to “sought-after, difficult to replace talent.” The book is based on the premise that “somewhere out there is a disruption with your company’s name on it,” and that “job security will demand a new and rare kind of expertise”—“innovation skills” or “I-Skills” for short.



Using a mix of anecdotes, practical advice, and exercise for the reader, Robert has created a lively and engaging book that explains how to design a personal innovation strategy and become indispensable. The seven fundamental “I-Skills” include how to embrace the opportunity mindset, think ahead of the curve, become an idea factory, become a standout collaborator, and persuade others to buy your ideas.



Robert is a frequent speaker and workshop leader on innovation. With clients such as IBM, Chevron, and Nokia, he has spoken and consulted around the world. He is the President of the [Innovation Resource Consulting Group](#) and the author of six books.