

# Why aren't candidates debating climate change?

By PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS

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The past 12 months have been the hottest on record, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Throughout the nation, drought, wildfires, floods and other extreme weather have made global warming a visible reality.

So it was maddening — and tragic — that both presidential candidates spent significant time during Tuesday's debate trying to one-up each other on how much more fossil fuels they plan to extract, burn and allow into the atmosphere. In three debates so far, climate change hasn't been mentioned once.

Moderator Candy Crowley said that

one of the “undecided” voters at the debate had prepared a climate-change question, but she didn't call on that person: “We just, you know, again, we knew that the economy was still the main thing.”

Yeah, we know. But if the nation, and the world, doesn't get serious about climate change — like, right now — the jobs of the future are at serious risk. Unfortunately, as MSNBC's Chris Hayes pointed out, future farmers of America whose crops will be destroyed by climate change are too young to vote in this election. Then again, if climate change isn't halted, jobs won't be the worst worry for future farmers — or nurses, or teachers, or factory workers. Survival will.

Yet there was former Gov. Mitt Romney challenging President Obama: “This has not been Mr. Oil, or Mr. Gas, or Mr. Coal,” as if that were a bad thing. The president went right back at Romney,

challenging his assertion that he “is a big coal guy,” as if that were a good thing, and furthering the myth there is such a thing as “clean coal.”

The bragging came after a question that also reflected a myth: that the president or the government has power over gas prices.

Gas prices are based on global demand. Period. No increase in domestic oil production will lower them. No pipeline will either, especially not the Keystone XL — if it is built. Gas will be coursing close to our precious water aquifers, moving from Canada to Texas en route to China. Neither fracking nor drilling on federal lands will make a difference. “Energy independence” is a phantom. Global warming is not.

Certainly, Obama and the Democrats offer a more forward-thinking energy policy than Romney and the Republicans. Romney has hitched his policy to the extraction industry (which has effectively

promoted climate-change denial). For his part, Obama does support increased fuel efficiency for cars, which will save Americans money since they will use less high-priced gas. He supports the tax credits that make it feasible for private companies to produce actual “clean” energy technology like solar, wind and biofuels. (Romney does not.)

But the political necessity to frame renewable energy as part of a jobs program, rather than a necessary response to the most pressing issue of our time, does the country a disservice.

An organization called Climate Silence ([climatesilence.org](http://climatesilence.org)) is offering graphics for concerned voters to use on social media as part of a campaign to demand that it be asked. It's surely an appropriate question for Monday's final debate on foreign policy: climate change is a national security threat greater than any we have ever faced.