

**Rutland Herald & Barre-Montpelier Times-Argus** Published: June 21, 2015  
<http://rutlandherald.com/article/20150621/OPINION06/706219969>

## Reality and fantasy diverge

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The first three months of 2015 were the warmest on record for seven Western states and the coldest on record for New York and Vermont. Here the transition from winter to spring at the end of April was so fast that there was only a few weeks between the last ice melting and afternoon temperatures of 80 degrees.

Despite the lying snow, the first four months of the year were rather dry in Vermont. But we have had more than ten inches of rain since the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, so both vegetables and weeds are growing well in our garden.

This spring the bloom of the locust trees was the most amazing I have ever seen. At the end of May the tall trees glistened white in the sun and their scent lasted for days.

So far 2015 is the warmest year on record for the globe, and extremes of weather continue. Ahead of the monsoon rains in India, temperatures near 120 degrees melted roads, and killed more than a thousand people.

Rainfall in Texas and Oklahoma in May set new records. Indeed the very heavy rain across Texas created major flooding and brought an end to several years of drought. Texas is one of a dozen states without official plans to deal with water extremes in a changing climate, because the governor does not 'believe' in climate change. This clash between belief and reality is one of the things to watch as we move into a new election cycle.

What a delight to have a Vermont presidential candidate, Senator Bernie Sanders, who can clearly state issues that most politicians avoid discussing. A candidate who stands for the American people, not the wealthy. One who understands the costs of our global economic system for people, as well as for the Earth and its climate.

Meanwhile, Congress is upset that the U.S. weather forecasts are not the world's best. Yet Congress has starved the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of funds to meet its mission for decades! In recent years, Congress has pressured NOAA to shift money from climate research to improve short term forecasts of severe weather. Congress has refused to let NOAA set up a climate service, and tried to prevent research on how climate change is increasing severe weather.

Do they think that weather and climate can be disconnected by political edict? Perhaps this election cycle they will all stand and chant "We are not climate scientists or meteorologists. Please don't blame us for the weather."

Last month, the chair of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, a senator from Texas, made the real priorities of Congress clear. He argued to reduce the National Science Foundation funding in the climate sciences, but continue to fund “the hard science areas of geoscience, like deep ocean drilling and geological research to find new energy sources.” Readers will recognize the familiar argument: “We can drill our way to a prosperous future”.

This month one presidential candidate, a devout Catholic, said that Pope Francis should stick to moral issues, and leave climate science to climate scientists. This is a strange argument because his political party refuses to listen to climate scientists. And the pope, before he entered seminary, had better training in scientific methods than most politicians. The papal encyclical released this week, which casts the mistreatment of both the poor and the Earth, our common home, in moral terms, is a thorny challenge to congressional arrogance.

The refrain that comes to my mind is “when will they ever learn”. Finding and burning still more fossil fuels will push the Earth back to the high atmospheric carbon dioxide levels of the hot-house climate of the Carboniferous Era. This will in time drown the foolishness in the nation’s capital.

But it is time to go to the garden and pick some broccoli and peas for dinner.

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