

CCL Town Hall & Candidate Forum Sample Questions

Town halls and candidate forums allow you to connect directly with your member of Congress. How you connect differs depending on the size of the event. Through good planning and by being ready to adapt to the situation, you can make the most of these opportunities.

We encourage you to try the following questions out and share what's worked in CCL's Forums.

Where the audience is politically mixed:

"Until recently, I didn't think much about climate change, but I've started to notice changes over the years. [Insert one sentence with a local impact, like "The ice fishing season is shorter, and I almost never get my cross-country skis on."] So I think we should take the threat of climate change seriously. How can we best manage the risks to our health and economy from a changing climate?"

"[Use your own brief story...] Last year my cousin almost lost her job because she couldn't get to work after the roads washed out in her town following a ten inch rain. That's supposed to be a thousand year event, but we've had several in the last few years. I think there's something to this problem of climate change. I'm tired of seeing Congress arguing over it. I'd like to see both parties come together and do something about it. How will you bring members of both parties together to make sure that we aren't making things worse for my kids and grandkids by ignoring climate change?"

Where the audience is progressive:

"I would guess that most people here are concerned, like I am, about climate change. And we're doing as much as we can locally and individually to lower our emissions, but we need federal action. I've personally concluded that the only way that can happen is by both parties working together, otherwise everything gets undone with a change in administration. What will you do to work with Republicans who are beginning to come around on this issue so that we can have some lasting solutions?"

"Climate change is the issue I am most concerned about, and it looks more urgent to me every day. The best policy I've seen for accelerating the transition to non-carbon emitting fuels is carbon fee and dividend, which puts a steadily rising fee on the carbon emissions of fossil fuels and returns the money to households to help low and moderate income people with the transition. It also looks like carbon fee and dividend is the climate policy that is most likely to be able to garner bipartisan support. I would like to see carbon fee and dividend enacted into law. What climate policies will you prioritize in Congress?"

Where the audience is conservative:

"I'm really concerned about us being responsible for our future and not passing along a large national debt or bankrupt social security program. I believe our CO2 emissions are also something we need to be responsible for, and I'm wondering what climate and energy policies you support to responsibly manage this risk."

“Some leaders I respect such as James Baker, Greg Mankiw and George Shultz have clearly stated that we need to have a rational policy that addresses our CO2 emissions, and I’d like to know what policies do you support in order to do that?”

“The wildfire season has already started again out west, I see. Last year my friends in California were telling me about all the smoke and ash falling in their neighborhood. I worry about their health and their homes, but I also wonder how much fighting these fires is costing us taxpayers. I think we need to take prudent action about climate change. What kinds of solutions would be consistent with conservative values?”

Additional Sample Questions

1. “Former Secretary of State George Shultz , who has served four Republican administrations including Reagan and Bush Sr., believes that a market-friendly solution is the best way to deal with global warming. He believes we should have a straightforward, simple fee on carbon emissions and send the revenue back to households in a monthly check. Are you familiar with Mr. Shultz’s solution, and do you believe that this market-friendly approach is the best way to respond?”
2. “At the University of (your state) we have some of the best scientists in the country. Their position matches that of 97% of climate scientists around the world that say global warming is tied directly to the burning of fossil fuels. What’s your preferred approach to solving climate change?”
3. “There are 7 billion people on the planet today. Most people want our standard of living. We cannot begrudge them that. However, with 7 billion people using fossil fuels, we won’t be able to keep our air clean and our water pure. We will have to make a larger place at the table for renewable energy. How do we do that, in a timely way and respecting the fact that U.S. businesses need predictability for their pricing?”
4. “I’ve heard talk about a carbon fee or tax. On one hand, it makes sense that if you want less of something, like pollution, you should tax it. On the other hand, I don’t want the size of government to grow. If we wind up with a Carbon Tax, would you please see to it that Congress returns that money to American households in the form of a monthly rebate?”
5. “How do you think we can best transition to a clean-energy economy?”
6. “The Pentagon reports that climate change is creating the conditions that destabilize governments around the world, leading to an increased risk of U.S. troops being sent abroad. Would you comment on this?”
7. “A majority of Americans, on both sides of the political spectrum, believe Congress should be taking steps to deal with the threat of a warming world. What emissions reducing plan do you support?”
8. “I heard a report that said a revenue-neutral fee on carbon pollution could create over 2 million jobs, and it was exciting to realize that we could do something about carbon pollution that is good for the economy. If this carbon fee really helps the economy and helps keep global warming in check, would you support it?”
9. “Thank you for being the kind of person who wants to be a public servant. An important issue facing us is our energy situation. We need to cut our carbon emissions so we don’t leave big problems for my kids and grandkids to handle. I don’t think regulations are going to be as effective or as quick as a market-based solution. What can you do in Congress to help the United States be a leader in the transition to clean energy? I look forward to your leadership in solving this problem.”