

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Dismal Theorem coming true?

This column devotes itself almost entirely to local issues, because those are the ones that we can influence, and they often affect us most.

But there's one issue, worldwide in scope, that has such an enormous impact it demands to be discussed everywhere: climate change.

According to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 97 percent of climate scientists worldwide agree the earth is warming with disastrous changes to come. Coastal cities like New York underwater. Frequent, violent storms. Droughts. Species extinction.



**MARTIN  
WEITZMAN**

Last month, 77-year-old Harvard environmental economist Martin Weitzman took his own life after becoming depressed about his diminishing capacity to influence public policy.

Weitzman had written a book discussing the "worst case" scenario of climate change:

"One thing we know for sure," he wrote, "is that a greater than 10 percent chance of the earth's eventual warming of 11 degrees Fahrenheit or more — the end of the human adventure on the planet as we know it — is too high.

"And that's the path the planet is on at the moment."

"Most everything we know tells us that climate change is bad," he continued. "Most everything we don't know tells us it's probably much worse."

Weitzman's thesis became known as the "Dismal Theorem."

In 2015, 195 nations pledged at a Paris summit to reduce greenhouse gases, keeping global temperatures to no more than 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels.

But President Trump scoffs at the Paris Agreement and has employed all the powers of the federal government to eliminate environmental safeguards and double down on the generation of greenhouse gases.



Meanwhile, the *Washington Post* reported recently, about 10

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percent of the earth's surface has already warmed 2 degrees or more, including most of Europe and the Mideast, Russia, a significant part of Canada, and even sections of the United States (parts of California and Minnesota).

Worldwide, greenhouse gas emissions are still increasing.

Is a 10 percent risk of global catastrophe worth worrying about?

Consider this: On Election Day 2016, pollsters said the odds of Hillary Clinton winning the popular vote but losing the Electoral College to Donald Trump were 10.5 percent. But that's what happened.

Unfortunately, climate change still seems remote enough that few of us are willing to confront the issue.

But civic leaders everywhere need to start talking about it, because the risk of doing nothing is unacceptable.



**10 PERCENT RISK—** Would you board a plane knowing there was a 10 percent chance it would crash before reaching its destination? That's the risk climate change poses to ending life on earth as we know it, according to Martin Weitzman's Dismal Theorem.