

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## How bad does it have to get?

It's now been six months since public schools in Pennsylvania and elsewhere closed because of the coronavirus.

No one knows when things will return to normal, but certain industries like travel and hospitality will take years to recover.

Concerted action at the federal level in February, when there were only a few cases in the United States, might have nipped the outbreak before it spread. But now the pandemic has left millions unemployed and wreaked havoc with the economy.

As bad as it is, however, the pandemic doesn't pack nearly the punch of climate change, which if left unchecked could destroy civilization as we know it.

The same Trump mentality that scoffed at epidemiologists is also disregarding, and mocking, the warnings of climate scientists.

The pandemic caused a run on supermarkets, with brief shortages of toilet paper and cleaning supplies. But there was plenty of food available because there were only minor disruptions to the supply chain.

Likewise, there were no extensive power shortages, which can be disastrous if they last long enough.

Power was knocked out in my neighborhood on June 3 by a thunderstorm and not restored for about 18 hours. The outage seemed to last forever, and yet it was trivial compared to the power outages that increasingly powerful storms will produce.

Here are some facts that should alarm any rational person:

\* Global emissions of methane, a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent than carbon dioxide, reached a rec-

ord high in 2017, the last year for which statistics are available. Methane emissions are a major byproduct of fracking and raising cattle, both of which are increasing.

\* Unprecedented heat waves in Canada and Siberia are melting the permafrost, releasing even more methane and carbon dioxide. The permafrost sequesters twice the carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere.

\* Brazil this year has lost nearly 8,000 square miles of tropical wetlands — an area larger than New Jersey — to fires set by ranchers and exacerbated by dry conditions.

\* Last year fires eliminated about 28,000 square miles of Brazil's tropical tree cover, the highest loss in 10 years.

\* Record heat waves have hit large parts of California with triple digit temperatures, up to 121 degrees in Los Angeles County.

\* Massive forest fires in California, Oregon and Washington have incinerated 3 million acres, an area larger than the state of Delaware.

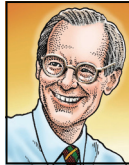
\* Temperatures in the polar regions of the Arctic and Antarctic were the second highest on record last year.

\* Sea ice loss this summer hit a record high.

\* Globally, every decade since 1980 has been warmer than the previous decade, and the last six years have been the warmest since global records began.

\* Concentrations of atmospheric greenhouse gases are now higher than any previous period going back 800,000 years.

It's too late to ward off destructive climate change. We can limit the damage, however, by electing a new president in November.



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton



A FOREST FIRE IN CALIFORNIA