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### February 4, 2012: Time to Leave the Democratic Party

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Title: Time to Leave the Democratic Party

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2/4/2012—A sobering op-ed by Maxwell Boykoff, assistant professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder and the author of *Who Speaks for the Climate*. He wrote it for the *Washington Post* on January 27, but I read a reprint in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (A Dangerous Shift in Obama's "Climate Change" Rhetoric). The gist of the piece is that while the "Earth is still getting hotter," even politicians who want to do something about it, like President Obama, are using "less charged and more consumer-friendly expressions," such as clean energy and energy independence to describe the problem. Boykoff writes that these changes in rhetoric make it more difficult for the public to understand global warming and more difficult to come up with creative solutions. I think this is true, but it is only part of the problem. As much as I admire President Obama—and unlike other liberals, I don't have much bad to say about him in general (except for the politically suicidal and morally wrong contraception regulations)—the shift away from global warming is another example of how mainstream politicians on the left fail to address fundamental issues. Unlike politicians on the right, Democrats tend to muddle through problems looking for pragmatic solutions. A Ron Paul on the left is inconceivable. Part of the problem is that libertarianism has an appeal to Americans that theories of the left do not—it is telling that I don't even have a name for what that alternative would be. Most left politicians are not socialists. I'm not suggesting that the Democratic Party is wrong to act this way. Politics is not philosophy. And all the Republican Party can offer is uncompromisable demands that make governance impossible. But one consequence of Democratic Party pragmatism is that the real problems do not get discussed. Global warming is a prime example. So the American people do not get the benefit of real debate. No wonder 48% of Americans now believe that the seriousness of global warming is generally exaggerated (March 2010 Gallup Poll). It seems to me the answer has to be to leave the Democratic Party (while carefully measuring actually voting to avoid helping Republican candidates). In the long run, solutions for our problems require actual discussion of them. If that is bad politics, then the political context has to change. Does this mean the Green Party? I'll have to take another look at where that party is.