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[^](#)Steering Right

One Way to tell the Republican candidates apart this Earth Day.

GOP gubernatorial rivals Allen Alley and Chris Dudley have canceled each other out on several litmus-test issues for their party.

They have taken the abortion issue off the table in the May 18 primary because both candidates are pro-choice. Likewise on creating jobs and reducing government spending, they espoused similar positions.

And while neither is likely to celebrate Earth Day this April 22, they hold slightly divergent positions on climate change—which is potentially significant for party voters seeking some distinction between the two.

Alley is skeptical of the large body of scientific research that suggests the earth is heating up, in part due to man-made causes. That's somewhat surprising, given that Alley is an engineer.

“I believe change is happening,” says Alley, who founded Pixelworks in 1996 and served for nine years as CEO of that Washington County flat-panel screenmaker. “But I have no position as to whether the earth is warming or cooling.”

Alley attributes his skepticism to experiences in the high-tech world when engineers would tell him that if they made just a minor tweak, they could solve all their problems with a process or product.

“I just have too much experience with scientists blaming one variable. I've lost millions listening to that kind of approach,” Alley says. “We'd fix one thing and find out that wasn't what was causing the problem.”

Dudley, who lacks Alley's scientific background, is more open to the climate conclusion advanced by many leading scientists.

“I believe there is global warming,” says Dudley, a former NBA player who spent a little more than five seasons with the Trail Blazers but has no political experience. “I don't know what percentage is attributable to human causes.”

Although Oregon will not determine the nation's approach on climate matters, the issue is increasingly intertwined with jobs and the economy. There are the costs of reducing carbon output and the opportunities presented by conservation and alternative energy, a theme pressed by Gov. Ted Kulongoski, a Democrat. (Both front-runners in the Democratic primary to succeed Kulongoski, Bill Bradbury and John Kitzhaber, accept global warming. Bradbury is an Al Gore disciple who has toured Oregon to talk about the subject.)

And even the slight difference between Alley and Dudley, the two more moderate Republicans in the primary field, may help voters choose. Two more conservative GOP candidates, former Gresham lawmaker John Lim and initiative activist Bill Sizemore, trail far behind in fundraising and thus the ability to buy crucial TV ads in the campaign's final month.

That leaves some room on the right for Alley. Chuck Wiese, an OSU-trained meteorologist and self-described "climate realist," says Dudley is wrong and global-warming believers are following a left-wing conspiracy off an economic cliff.

"Carbon taxes or 'cap and trade' in the name of saving Mother Earth would be horrendous," Wiese says.

Alley also needs ammunition to convince GOP-ers that his 14-month stint until March 2008 (see ["Lives of an Alley Cat," WW, March 12, 2008](#)) as deputy chief of staff to Kulongoski is not reflective of his values. Veering right on climate is one way to appeal to skeptics.

Alley's got a ways to go, however, to match the certainty expressed last week by Sizemore. At a City Club candidate forum April 16, Sizemore chastised his rivals, including Lim, for even considering that the climate might be heating up.

"I think global warming is a hoax," Sizemore says, adding any governor has to be willing to "call nonsense nonsense."