

Aliah Wales-Miller

Scientists: A Future for Politics

On a cool spring afternoon presidential candidate Susan Solomon—atmospheric chemist responsible for research on the depletion of the ozone layer and its restoration—steps up to the podium. She begins her campaign in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she has taught atmospheric chemistry and climate science since 2011. If she gets elected, she hopes to focus on issues of climate change and sustainable fuel sources. She wants to transition America away from fossil fuels, much in the same way she pushed chemical companies in China, India, and the United States to end the use of chlorofluorocarbons, the main cause of ozone depletion. She has plans to solve the problems facing our country—healthcare, poverty, infrastructure, fuel, and climate change—applying three tenants she uses in her scientific work, and which she identified in an interview with the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*: credibility, manageability, and accountability.

Credibility refers to how a problem must be identified. Before Solomon and her team could do anything about the ozone layer, they had to collect evidence that the ozone layer was shrinking and how it affected global weather conditions. Now elected, Solomon can apply this approach to issues like fossil fuels. The extraction of fossil fuels through fracking and mining, which destroys landscapes and poisons water, the warming effects of burning these fuels, as well as pollution which causes respiratory diseases, are some complications the scientific advocacy group *Union of Concerned Scientists* identifies.

Manageability is how we can resolve the problem. It involves ideas that must be reviewed, refined, and put into practice. In the case of ozone depletion, when Solomon and other scientists found that the chlorofluorocarbons present in products like hairspray and deodorant were the culprit, they worked with companies to stop production of these things. In the government, scientists like Solomon could fund initiatives to increase use of solar, wind, and electricity to power our nation. They could work alongside scientists developing the latest solid state batteries made from abundant sodium, to get them into production and into our devices more quickly.

Now as our ozone layer heals (because it is repairing itself), we must turn to accountability. We must ask ourselves, ask our elected officials, have we done everything we possibly can? Have we raised the minimum wage as much as the economy can support? Have we extended affordable healthcare to as many people as possible? Have we reduced our carbon emissions as much as possible, or switched to a more renewable energy source? Susan Solomon would say no, we have not done enough.

I believe what our country needs is not more politicians, we need more scientists who the politicians can trust and lean on. We need campaigns built on science, promoting what is being done and what it means. So elect Susan Solomon for President, because we need someone who will make the best decisions for the planet and the people living in it.