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OPINION

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Action needed on climate change

NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information just reported that 2021 ranked as the fourth-warmest year on record, with the U.S. experiencing 20 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters. These events caused at least 688 deaths and many more injuries.

With the six warmest years on record happening since 2012 and chaotic weather events becoming more frequent, only the most obstinate partisan could fail to recognize that the climate crisis is happening now and that we are rapidly running out of time to stop it from spiraling out of control.

Our representative in Congress, Rep. Buddy Carter, serves on the House Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change, so he is presumably aware of the enormity of the problem. However, he sent a questionnaire to his constituents asking us to select from a long list the issues we want Congress to prioritize in 2022. Absent from the list was climate change or anything related to it.

Carter is not alone in his unwillingness to take decisive action to protect the climate that sustains our lives. The Chatham County delegation in the Georgia General Assembly recently announced in this newspaper their top priorities for the upcoming legislative session. None mentioned climate.

Public opinion is not an obstacle. According to a 2020 Stanford University survey, 80% of Georgians agree that global temperatures are rising, and that the government should limit greenhouse gas emissions. It's time for our state and federal elected officials to join the City of Savannah's effort to transition to 100% clean energy.

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Editor's note: Karen Graine is co-direction of the Center for a Sustainable Coast, a Georgia-based environmental watchdog group.