This is the time of year when we start to think about global warming. Because the weather is about to get warmer. Please God.

A new angle comes up almost every day. A Harvard professor recently reported that 7,000-year-old mummies in Chile are turning into “black ooze” because the air around them is getting more humid. In California, baby sea lions are in trouble because the ocean is heating up.

Meanwhile, in Florida, there’s a report that state employees have been barred from using the term “climate change.”

Since Florida is drowning in rising tides, you’d think this would be a tough rule to follow. It would be like telling prosecutors in New York not to mention the term “indicted state legislator.” Or banning Texas road crews from ever saying “dead armadillo.”

But, according to the Florida Center for Investigative Reporting, some employees at the Florida Department of Environmental Protection say they have indeed been directed to avoid the terms “global warming” and “climate change,” even when they’re talking about conserving the coastline or the coral reefs. Gov. Rick Scott denies there is any prohibition, and it’s certainly possible his underlings just decided to clamp down on their own, once they became aware of his position.

The governor’s position is to point out that he is “not a scientist” whenever the topic comes up. It’d be a bit tough to follow suit if you are, say, a D.E.P. scientist.

But other people find his approach extremely attractive. Former governor and
future presidential candidate Jeb Bush has revealed that he, too, is not a scientist. A spokeswoman told The Wall Street Journal that Bush does believe the climate is changing but he’s not sure about “the extent to which humans contribute.” Also, whatever he concludes is not going to involve “alarmist, far left environmental policies.”

Most of the other potential Republican contenders follow a similar route when they can’t avoid the matter entirely. The one who’s been pressed hardest on global warming recently may be the governor of Wisconsin, Scott Walker, who was at a conservative conference outside of Washington when he was approached by a second grader who wanted to know where he stood.

Walker said he is a former boy scout who “always thought maybe campsites should be cleaner.” I swear.

“Do you care about climate change?” the child pressed. He is the son of an environmental activist, so don’t be expecting this kind of persistence every time a politician takes a grade-school tour.

“Ultimately, to me, I want to make sure that we have all the natural resources as possible moving forward just like I’ve done for everybody in Wisconsin. O.K.?” responded the governor.

Now climate change is perhaps the most important long-term issue the next American president will have to deal with. Our international enemies will come and go; our deficits will rise and fall. But if the atmosphere keeps getting clogged with greenhouse gases, future generations will be too busy with the floods and droughts to care.

If you were seriously thinking about running for president of the United States, wouldn’t this be something you’d want to have studied up on? Have you ever heard anybody say he couldn’t comment on tax policy because he wasn’t an accountant?

These guys don’t act like people who think the scientists are wrong when they say global warming is real, and that human activity creates all or part of the problem. They act like people who don’t want to have to face up to the facts and come up with solutions. Which would involve making the coal and oil companies super unhappy.

They’re sort of like the mayor in “Jaws” who won’t admit there’s a killer shark out there because it’s the start of the town’s tourism season. (“Now I am not a marine biologist ...”)

It’s one thing to be a climate-change denier like Senator James Inhofe, the
(gasp) chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, who brought a snowball into the Senate to demonstrate his conviction that the Earth is not getting warmer. It’s another to pretend as if it’s O.K. to dodge the whole question.

If you’re a presidential candidate, the only three intellectually honest answers to global warming queries are:

“My thoughts about this are similar to those of my intellectual role model, James Inhofe.”

“Yes, climate change is real, and I will give you my plan for reducing carbon emissions just as soon as my six biggest campaign donors finish slamming the door on their way out.”

“Sure, it’s real. But by the time Miami goes under water, I’ll be dead. So who cares?”

Or you can tell people that the shark might or might not be in the water, and might or might not be hungry, but that this is no time to stop swimming.

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