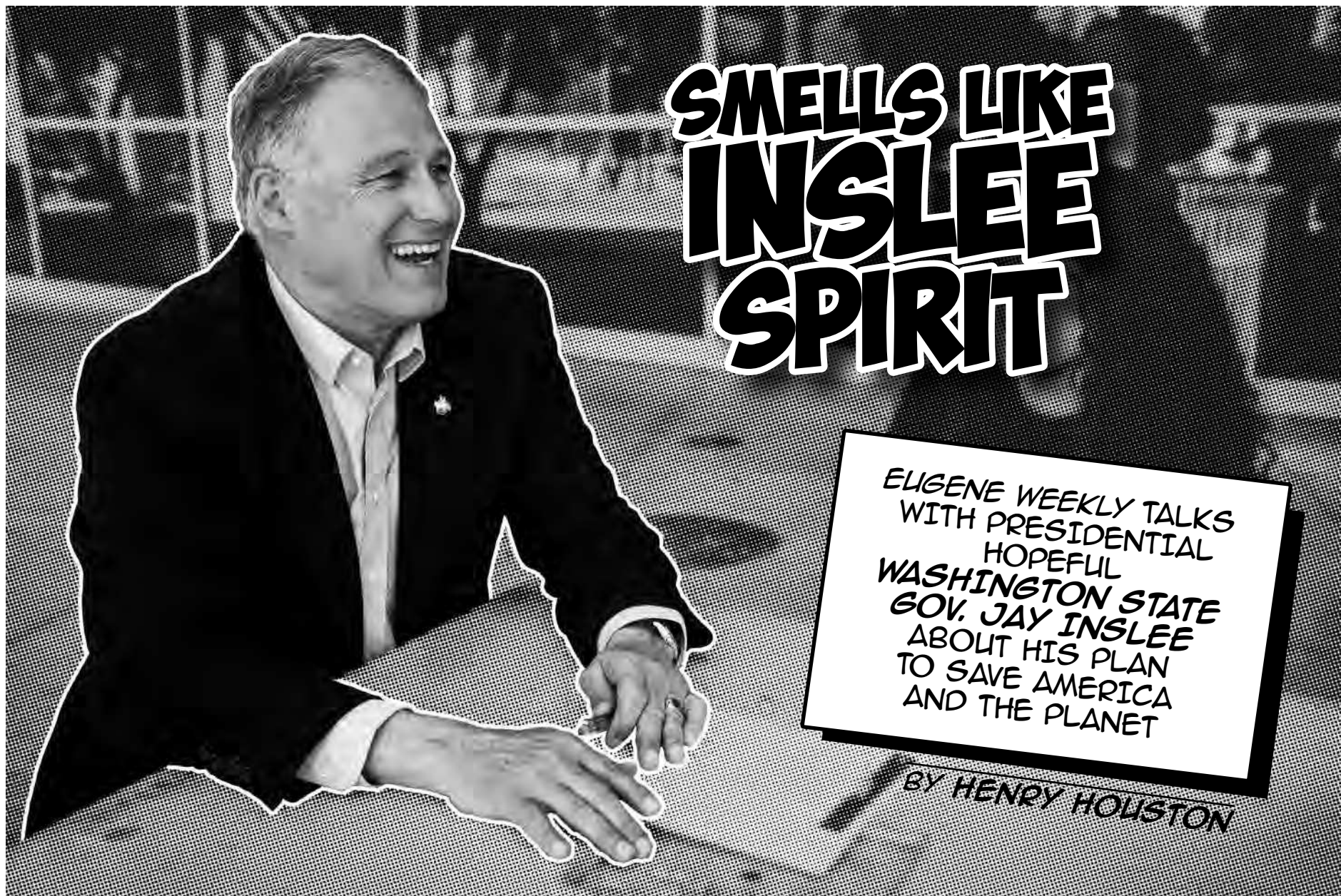




Time is running out to do something about climate change. Last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported that, to keep a global temperature change below 1.5 degrees Celsius, carbon dioxide emissions will have to be cut by 45 percent by 2030. And it's been two minutes to midnight since 2018, according to the Doomsday Clock, a project by *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* that has monitored global threats from things like imminent nuclear war during the Cold War.

That's one minute closer to midnight compared to 2016.

Dealing with climate change is big on the mind of Washington state Gov. Jay Inslee, whose presidential platform is focused on reinventing the U.S. economy to fight our biggest existential crisis.

In fact, Inslee is determined to beat it, especially since it's affecting his basketball performance.

While on the campaign trail, Inslee tells *Eugene Weekly*, he was shooting hoops and went five-for-21 in front of a CBS reporter. Rather than admit he was off his game, he jokingly blamed it on a scapegoat.

"That's climate change at work," he recalls telling the reporter.

Inslee is one of 25 candidates hoping to receive the Democratic nomination to face off against President Donald Trump. It's a pool of possible first-ever presidents: gay, Asian American and a black woman.

Inslee wants to be the first-ever climate change president. He's put forth plans to save the U.S. — and the world — from ecological devastation.

"We're going to fund it by avoiding the disaster costs of not doing anything," Inslee tells *EW*. "We want to avoid those trillions of dollars of damages we'd otherwise have to pay for."

The Democratic hopeful field is very crowded — to say the least. And more-favorable polls put Inslee at around one percent. By focusing on the economy and fighting climate change, he believes he can beat Trump, whose economic numbers look good on paper.

STANDING OUT IN A BATTLE ROYALE

As of press time, at least 27 candidates want to be president in 2021. More have filed, but 27 accounts for the more notable ones. That's a lot of noise for Inslee to shout over.

But climate change has become a bigger issue for U.S. voters. A poll conducted for CNN released in April shows 82 percent of registered Democratic Party responders say they support a candidate who would take aggressive action to slow the effects of climate change.

Another poll conducted May 17-19 shows 38 percent of registered voters think the top priority of Congress should be addressing climate change.

Although Inslee received an "A" on climate change from Greenpeace — the highest mark among the rest of the Democratic presidential hopefuls — presidential polls show Inslee at the bottom, with support in the single digits.

Sticking to a single issue when candidates like Sen. Elizabeth Warren are pushing for several issues and Sen. Bernie Sanders is proposing a plan for everything is a wise political strategy, says University of Oregon political science associate professor Craig Kauffman.

"The reality is that most voters need to have some label to apply to each candidate to try and label them to keep track in their mind about who is who," he says.

Kauffman is a political scientist who studies climate change policies. He says the window is narrow — and closing — to put forth a solution to prevent the worst effects of climate change.

"The sooner we do it, the less costly and less painful it will be," he adds. "We're experiencing the onset of climate change, and the symptoms will become more severe over time."

After Oregon Senate Republicans played hooky to rob Senate Democrats of a quorum, and the Democrats were unable to unite the party, it grows uncertain whether legislators can do anything about climate change.

Inslee tells *EW* he's confident that politicians can get the job done and that some local and state governments have solutions.

First, Inslee tells me he wanted to sic Washington State Patrol on the missing Oregon Senate Republicans if they were in his state, but adds that Oregon shouldn't give up on climate change — and commends Gov. Kate Brown's work performance. He says he sees other options out there.

Inslee knows what it's like for plans to change. Washington state had to find alternatives to a carbon tax measure rejected by voters in 2018.

"A pricing mechanism isn't the only game in town," he says. "We had a pricing mechanism that didn't pass. We didn't give up and got back in the saddle."

This year, Inslee signed four clean energy bills intended to compensate for voters' rejecting a carbon pricing mechanism.

HB 2042 intends to advance green transportation in Washington state. It makes electric cars more affordable by offering a rebate of \$2,500 on new cars priced under \$45,000, and \$1,600 for cars under \$30,000.

The law also intends to find ways to provide financing assistance so lower-income residents can buy electric cars.

Inslee also signed a law that Washington must be powered 100 percent by clean energy by 2045. California, Hawaii and New Mexico have similar laws, but Inslee says Washington's law is the best in the country because it incorporates social justice values.

Inslee adds that U.S. voters are starting to get the message about the importance of his climate change message and his commitment to take on Earth's greatest existential crisis. The day after the first set of Democratic debates, he says, he raised