

Environmental Politics in 2004

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Good afternoon. I'm Jim DiPeso, the Policy Director of REP America, the national grassroots organization of Republicans for Environmental Protection.

I know what some of you are thinking. Republicans for Environmental Protection – sounds sort of like an oxymoron. Like light traffic in Manhattan or – here's my personal favorite – the Federal Paperwork Reduction Act.

But we're a real organization made up of real individuals – Republicans who care about restoring our party's conservation tradition. The group was founded in 1995 by three women who attended an endangered species conference in Washington D.C. and were greeted with titters when they identified themselves as Republicans.

Our goal is to speed up the day when having Republicans at a conservation conference does not result in titters or even a second thought. We are proud to call ourselves Theodore Roosevelt Republicans – ordinary voters trying to keep alive the legacy of a great president who said that conservation is America's patriotic duty.

We look at our mission as political conservation biology, keeping alive that extant gene pool of conservation-minded Republicans. We have not yet gone the way of the woolly mammoth!

Looking back at Roosevelt's time, we can get an early glimpse of how environmental politics is playing out in our country today. Many of the political dynamics that surround issues today had parallels when Theodore Roosevelt was around. Granted, that was a much different era. You didn't have polls or focus groups or fancy

consultants and you certainly didn't have anywhere near the amount of money from entrenched interests pouring into campaigns that you see today.

But at the most basic level, much *hasn't* changed. Environmental politics is all about how we sort out our never-ending debates about tangible resources – forests, water, wildlife, and the like – and how our values of freedom, democracy, equality, community, and stewardship influence those debates.

These are values rooted in the history and culture of a unique nation that was shaped by a howling wilderness. The wilderness supplied a vast cornucopia of resources to build the greatest economic machine in the history of the world. The wilderness forged a culture of individual opportunity and entrepreneurship because one could escape poor economic prospects at home by heading to the virgin lands out west.

To really understand how the environment will factor in the politics of 2004, you have to understand the history of environmental politics in this country. Because of the organization I represent and the message we bring, I'm going to pay particular attention to the interplay between the environment and Republican politics, how that interplay may affect how Republican candidates will treat the environment in 2004, and how Republican voters may take the environment into account in the voting booth.

THE ENVIRONMENT AS A POLITICAL ISSUE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

The environment emerged as an issue in American politics in the mid-19th century. At the time, the prevailing ethos was that wilderness must be tamed and nature conquered to build the nation. But a small segment of Americans, educated people influenced by Transcendental ideas and Romantic literature, began sounding an alarm about the wanton waste of natural resources that was taking place at that time. An emerging school of thought at the time also held that exposure to natural beauty was good for one's health and that a democracy ought to afford such opportunities to everyone.

Out of these movements came our first national parks and national forests. These movements were led by upper-class people and it's fair to say many had Republican leanings.

In fact, the first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, set an important conservation precedent by signing a bill that transferred Yosemite Valley to the state of California solely for use as a public park. That precedent was reinforced in 1872 with the establishment of Yellowstone National Park.

An obscure Republican president named Benjamin Harrison signed the law authorizing the establishment of forest reserves, forerunners of our national forests. This was conservation in a utilitarian sense because of the role forests play in supplying and purifying water.

The high point of the early conservation movement was the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. He compiled an astonishing record of achievement – 130 million acres of national forests, five national parks, 18 national monuments, and 55 bird and game reservations that became the nucleus of our system of national wildlife refuges.

Theodore Roosevelt had a lifelong interest in birds, wildlife, and natural history, but he had another, broader reason for his action. He was a nationalist. He saw natural resources as the fundamental basis of national strength and prosperity. He believed that conservation was essential to keeping the country strong and prosperous for the long term. That’s what we mean when we say, “Conservation is conservative.”

Did all of Roosevelt’s Republican colleagues share his views? Of course not. His bitterest enemy in Washington was Speaker Joseph Cannon, who was supposed to have said, “Not one cent for scenery!” Roosevelt and Cannon represented two strains of thought within the Republican Party, one viewing conservation as a necessary underpinning of national strength and well-being, the other viewing conservation skeptically as an impediment to freedom, enterprise, and prosperity.

That gets to the nub of the environmental debates we have today. To what extent should we exploit natural resources to meet today's wants and needs, and what should we do, if anything, to protect resources on behalf of unborn generations? These questions expose a fault line – within the Republican Party and within the nation at large.

Perhaps Roosevelt's most lasting political achievement was that he hard-wired the environment into our national political architecture. While political interest in the issue has ebbed and flowed, the environment undeniably has been a national issue since the early 20th century.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

The next great wave of environmental politics crested in the 1960s and 1970s. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was a catalyst, one of many signs that the prosperity of the post-World War II era was coming at a horrendous price – poisonous wastes fouling the air, water, and land.

During that time, there was less of the political polarization you see today. You had liberal Democrats – Hubert Humphrey – and conservative Democrats – Scoop Jackson. You had conservative Republicans – Barry Goldwater. And you had liberal Republicans – such as Nelson Rockefeller, Jacob Javits, Charles Percy, and John Chafee.

Goldwater and Humphrey fought like cats and dogs on the floor of the Senate on just about every issue you can think of. But at the end of the day, they were friends. You didn't have the personalized animosity in Congress that you have today. It was easier to reach across the aisle and cut deals then than it is today. That had implications for the environment then. What we call the lack of civility has implications for environmental politics today.

There was another philosophical dimension in play. In 1964, Congress passed the Wilderness Act, thanks to the leadership of Pennsylvania Republican Congressman John Saylor, who was a very conservative Republican, but a conservative of a different sort.

Saylor, in many ways, was a throwback to an older strain of conservatism that was less materialistic, less enamored of economic growth at all costs, and more focused on conserving traditions and values – the intangible, even spiritual aspects of life.

Saylor believed wilderness was essential to national defense. Imagine that notion coming out of Tom DeLay's mouth. Saylor said wilderness offered a toughening experience that would keep Americans from getting soft and, as he put it on the floor of Congress in 1956, prevent us from "deteriorating in luxury and ripening for the hardy conquerors of another century." Back in the 1920s and 1930s, Herbert Hoover had somewhat similar concerns about materialism and moral decay, one reason he greatly expanded our national parks system to provide healthy outdoor recreation.

Saylor spoke about taking special pride, as American patriots, in the unspoiled lands of the backcountry. He talked about protecting wilderness as a pathway for humility that would keep us from getting too big for our britches. This was a conservatism that emphasized prudence, the art of avoiding hubris and triumphalism.

Ultimately, however, it was practical politics that came to the aid of the environmental movement during that era. It was a Republican looking to strengthen his political appeal who led the charge to turn the tide against pollution and to expand protection of natural areas. In 1970, Richard Nixon sent Congress a 37-point environmental platform that became the basis of many of the national environmental laws that we have on the books today. Nixon said, "It is now or never" to clean up the air, water, and land.

Was Nixon a closet greenie? Probably not. For all his faults, however, he was a canny politician. After the 1968 election, Nixon was at a pre-inaugural dinner and, as luck would have it, Russell Train was seated next to him. Train later went on to become EPA's second administrator. He told Nixon at the dinner that the environment

would be a great way to unite America. At the time, of course, the nation was experiencing a very rough patch – badly divided about Vietnam, college campuses in turmoil, violence in the cities. Nixon immediately got Train’s message.

So, no, Nixon was not much of a conservationist, but he grasped the broad political appeal of fighting pollution and protecting our natural heritage. He proceeded to compile an admirable environmental record.

Nixon’s record was not an aberration. At the state levels, governors took up the charge of protecting the environment. Republicans such as Tom McCall in Oregon, Dan Evans in Washington, Bill Milliken in Michigan, David Cargo in New Mexico, and Deane Davis in Vermont fought for parks, open space, and pollution cleanup.

But all that was a long time ago. Theodore Roosevelt is a colorful, slightly eccentric figure from the tintype era, a world that has long since vanished. John Saylor and Tom McCall are largely forgotten statesmen. And Richard Nixon has left this world for precincts unknown.

So, you may ask, what has happened over the past 30 years? Why has the environment become a polarizing issue between the two major parties? Why is an issue Richard Nixon seized upon to unite the country now portrayed as a litmus test for choosing up sides?

THE “REDS,” THE “BLUES,” AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The second wave of environmentalism reinforced the accomplishments of the first to a large degree. Today, no one would call a plume rising from a smokestack a necessary price of progress. Today, every politician says he or she favors a clean environment. Numerous polls show that environmental protection enjoys broad support from American citizens across the spectrum.

But with broad support comes a tension embedded in our history as both exploiters and protectors of nature. We still wrestle with the question I alluded to earlier – to what extent do we make use of natural resources to meet our needs today, and to what extent are we obligated to look after the needs of unborn generations?

More contemporary factors are at work as well. We hear that we live in a “red” and “blue” nation, two Americas divided by culture, by the mental pictures making up our worldviews. The reds and the blues speak a common language but hear different meanings, like two radio sets tuned to different frequencies, uncomprehending and talking past each other.

The “red” and “blue” divide is overly simplified, of course. Each person, whether Republican, Democrat or Independent, carries a unique mix of values, passions, likes, dislikes, and neuroses into the voting booth. Not every Republican cares for Rush Limbaugh and not every Democrat agrees with Al Franken. Still, “red” and “blue” is a useful, broad-brush way to describe how our politics have become more divisive.

The reasons for the “red and blue” state of affairs are very complex and would be worth a two hour lecture in and of itself. An interesting theory was laid out in the 1997 book *The Fourth Turning* by William Strauss and Neil Howe. The authors hold that America goes through generational cycles that include four phases – a High, a great Awakening, an Unraveling, and then a Crisis that resets the clock. If this theory is true, perhaps we are experiencing an unraveling.

Regardless of the underlying cause, both parties seem to have become internally more uniform in their ideologies, with less overlap between the parties. There are fewer conservative Democrats such as Scoop Jackson, and fewer liberal Republicans such as Nelson Rockefeller.

America’s current political complexion is reflected in the dramatic changes that have come over the Republican Party since the mid-20th century. In those days, the party was dominated by its Northeastern establishment – the “Rockefeller Republicans” of yore. Out West, a colorful iconoclast named Barry Goldwater was leading an insurgency challenging the Northeastern establishment. In 1964, Goldwater captured five southern states in the presidential election, the first chink in the Democratic Party redoubt that used to be known as the Solid South.

Today, the Solid South is solidly Republican, an astonishing political makeover. Goldwater’s insurgency, expanded by Ronald Reagan, transferred the party’s center of gravity to the South and West. The Northeastern establishment, the Rockefeller Republicans, is now a quiet minority.

Today, the Republican Party leadership takes much of its intellectual nourishment from an ideological strain that 1) doubts whether environmental problems are as serious as an honest look at the science would admit, and 2) calls for leaving most environmental problem-solving to the private market, under the quasi-theological assumption that a perfectly functioning market has all the answers. The older conservative notions of forbearance, humility, and prudence seem to have no place in this worldview.

Not that the party leadership is terribly consistent about this ideology. Much of the party's support comes from entrenched interest groups – sugar, cotton, and fossil energy, for example – that depend on federal subsidies, trade preferences, and tax breaks. One result of this contradiction is that the party of fiscal responsibility has produced exploding deficits that will burden future generations with enormous debts. But that's another issue.

As the '60s and '70s gave way to the '80s, the environment increasingly became identified with the politics of the left. As the Vietnam War wound down, the environment became a new cause for the passions of that time, just another "interest" in the band of interest groups making up the ever-quarreling Democratic Party.

The national environmental groups, those centering their operations on lobbying in Washington D.C., cast their lot mostly with the Democratic Party. In tandem with the rise of dogmatic ideologues in the Republican Party, the result of that choice was that the environment has become a political football. The Republican Party is perceived today, with some accuracy, as indifferent or even hostile to environmental protection.

It is an exaggeration to say that the big environmental groups are handmaidens of the Democratic Party.

But a number of thoughtful, pro-environment Republican leaders, such as former Washington Governor Dan Evans,

believe that environmentalists have unnecessarily alienated Republican politicians who otherwise may be receptive to their message. We believe, however, that the single largest factor for the increased polarization around the environment is that politics has increasingly become a corrosive money chase.

In 2000, George W. Bush and Al Gore together spent more than \$300 million on their campaigns. In the 2002 cycle, \$1 billion was spent on all House and Senate races. In 2004, those numbers will only go up. It seems that the environment has been swept up in this battle of incomprehension between the “reds” and the “blues.” Harsh language about “environmental wackos” or “junk science” spews from the media.

And yet – are things really that simple? The black-and-white language of “jobs vs. environment” does not tell the whole story. There’s more to environmental politics than meets the eye. There are shades of gray and nuances that you may not see in superficial media reports, spin, and counter-spin.

THE 2004 ELECTION YEAR

Here we are in another madcap presidential election year. We’re already past the first wave of caucuses and primaries. What can we say about how the environment will play out in the 2004 presidential election, from our unusual standpoint as Republicans for environmental protection?

Let’s start with some polling data. Let’s talk about swing voters, swing states, and Republican-tending constituencies where environmental messages resonate. I’ll turn to the famous – or infamous, take your pick – Frank Luntz memo. I’ll talk about an intriguing political brush fire out West that could mean real trouble for President Bush. Then I’ll wrap this up, and come to some conclusions that undoubtedly will fall short of the mark come November 2.

In spite of “red” and “blue” polarization, polls show strong support for environmental protection across the board. Here’s an example: In a New York Times/CBS poll conducted shortly after the November 2002 election, 46 percent of Republicans said the federal government

should do more to regulate the environmental and safety practices of business. Only 21 percent said less should be done.

However, in the same poll, 57 percent of Republicans supported oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Only 26 percent of Democrats and 36 percent of Independents agreed. There's that fault line, that tension in the GOP I spoke of earlier.

In spite of broad support, the environment is usually not the top issue determining how people vote for candidates. It's not even close. In May 2003, a Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll conducted by a leading Republican and Democratic pollster asked Americans to list the one or two issues President Bush and Congress should address. Fifty-seven percent chose the economy. Thirty-six percent said fighting terrorism. Only 6 percent chose the environment.

A CBS News/New York Times poll released in January 2004 asked voters to identify the one issue they would like the presidential candidates to discuss. The economy, jobs, and unemployment were listed by twenty-five percent. The environment came in at one percent. That was not out of the ordinary. In CBS News/New York Times polls dating back five years, the number of respondents who cite the environment as the nation's most important problem has rarely exceeded one percent.

However, as we all know, broad-brush polling numbers present an incomplete picture of a very large, very complex, very diverse nation. While it may seem that support for the environment is a mile wide and an inch deep, electoral support for the environment can be quite high, depending on the context.

Ballot measures are an example. In the November 2003 election, 64 of 77 local and state land protection ballot measures were approved by the voters. In November 2002, 95 of 112 such measures were approved. And not just in liberal enclaves such as Santa Monica or Boulder. They were approved in conservative strongholds, such as Dallas, Colorado Springs, and southwest Florida. These are communities that voted for

bonds and/or taxes for open space acquisition and public recreation projects, often by hefty margins.

What do these facts and figures tell you? They tell you that conservative voters are not knee-jerk anti-environmentalists.

Moreover, the broad-brush polling numbers don't have a fine enough resolution to pinpoint swing constituencies around the country where voters have conservative ideas about fiscal and other issues, but strongly support environmental protection. In these swing, often suburban, constituencies, the environment can emerge as an issue that can tip an election outcome. I'll give you some examples, which show that partisan polarization on this issue is not as all-encompassing as we may think.

The first is one that I am personally familiar with – Washington State's 8th Congressional District. The 8th is one of those classic suburban districts, with a mix of middle, upper middle, and high-income communities across Lake Washington from Seattle. Bill Gates lives in the 8th District in a 20,000-square-foot home in a very toney community.

Since 1993, the 8th District has been represented by Jennifer Dunn in the House. Formerly chair of the Washington State Republican Party, Jennifer Dunn has won re-election by wide margins and has been steadfastly loyal to President Bush – except on one high-profile issue. Last year, Jennifer Dunn voted against opening ANWR to oil drilling.

Dunn is nobody's fool. She knows that her district went for Al Gore in 2000 and that the environment is a big issue for her constituents. That's why she has been out front on selected environmental issues, such as a tax law change that would make it easier to keep the 8th District's working forests in the tree business rather than selling out to real estate developers.

Here's another example: REP America's founder and current president Martha Marks served for 10 years as a county commissioner in Lake County, part of Illinois' 10th Congressional District. She ran as a Republican and won the endorsement of the Sierra Club. The Illinois

10th is a constituency similar in political and economic complexion to the Washington 8th.

In 2000, Lake County voters approved \$85 million in bonds to expand the county's forest preserves. They narrowly supported George W. Bush for president and a Democrat for Congress. The Democrat, however, lost in the 10th District overall to Mark Kirk, a fiscally conservative Republican who has compiled a stellar environmental voting record in the House.

One more example. Great Outdoors Colorado is a non-profit working on protecting that rapidly growing state's open spaces. In 2001, Great Outdoors Colorado took a poll in Front Range communities that make up bedrock Republican territory. The poll results showed that Republicans were more likely than Democrats to support funding for open space, parks, and wildlife habitat.

In the January-February 2004 edition of *The Atlantic*, there is a very interesting article by Joshua Green entitled "In Search of the Elusive Swing Voter."

The article tells us that 12 states were decided by fewer than five percentage points in the 2000 presidential election. In several of those states, the environment potentially is an issue that could tip the outcome.

The Northwest states of Oregon and Washington are two of those swing states. Together, they have 18 electoral votes. Green issues are leading public concerns in both states, particularly in the Seattle and Portland metro areas. Gore won both states, although Oregon was very close.

The Democratic candidate, whether it's John Kerry or somebody else, will talk a lot about the environment in Washington and Oregon. You'll hear damning words about the president's record on public lands, that it's been one giveaway after another to commodity interests. Bush, in his defense, will talk about restoring healthy forests and increased funding for salmon restoration.

Nevada, with five electoral votes, is another state where the environment could be a swing issue. Nevada went for Bush by fewer than four points in 2000. President Bush supports the Yucca Mountain

nuclear waste repository – or nuclear waste suppository as a former Nevada senator once called it. Opposition to burying high-level nuclear waste 100 miles north of Las Vegas unites Nevadans across the political spectrum.

Florida and its treasure trove of 27 electoral votes will be in play as well, and it is another state where the environment could be a tipping issue. Florida voters love their manatees, love the Everglades, and hate offshore oil drilling. It is one of only two states that a coalition of Democrat-leaning interest groups will target in the South this year.

Here is an enticing factoid. Florida International University has conducted a series of polls since 1995 asking Floridians whether environmental regulations are too strict or not too strict. Between 1995 and 2002, the percentage that said environmental regulations were not too strict has drifted upward from 71 to 78 percent. The pollsters believe Gore could have taken Florida four years ago had he made more hay about the environment.

The operatives in both the Republican and Democratic shops are fully aware that the environment is an issue that could bite President Bush come November. That observation runs through the famous memo produced last year by GOP pollster Frank Luntz.²

The Luntz memo stated bluntly that “The environment is probably the single issue on which Republicans in general – and President Bush in particular – are most vulnerable.”

Luntz calls on Republican candidates to talk about the issue more skillfully, in a way that doesn’t alienate swing voters or suburban Republican women. Don’t use scary words such as “rollbacks.” Instead, talk about “common sense” solutions grounded in “sound science.” Don’t talk about cost-effectiveness tests, which sound cold and heartless. Instead, talk about unnecessary regulations that hurt “moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas.”

So, you won’t hear President Bush calling the EPA a “Gestapo” agency, as Tom DeLay did a number of years ago. The President’s

² Luntz, Frank. “Straight Talk – The Environment: A Cleaner, Safer, Healthier America.” The Luntz Research Company, pp. 131-146.

proposed EPA budget, for example, states that “President Bush has focused on addressing these challenges in a common sense, cost-effective manner based on sound science, and his 2005 budget builds upon these successful principles.” Notice the carefully calibrated language.

Notice also, that the president recently offered environmental initiatives in key swing states – more funding for Great Lakes cleanup, a high-profile issue in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ohio. More salmon money for Washington and Oregon. An exemption for New Hampshire on MTBE levels in gasoline.

The *Atlantic* article on swing voters describes the vast computer databases both parties will use to study socio-economic sub-units of the body politic. The Republican Voter Vault has detailed data on 165 million people. The Democratic DataMart has tabs on 158 million. They know how often you vote, what kind of car you drive, what you watch on TV, and what magazines you subscribe to. Like retail marketers zeroing in on consumers, the political operators will hunt out pockets of people likely to support their candidates and craft language that appeals to them.

Voters who think about the environment a lot, and even those who think about it a little, can expect to have their mental and emotional buttons pushed repeatedly. The candidates will choose language that will make technically complex issues concrete for voters who are not specialists and have many other things on their minds. We as voters will be treated like flatworms on a microscope slide – poked and probed, our every twitch observed and recorded, grist for the image makers and the spin machines.

Yes, it seems we’re a long way from Theodore Roosevelt’s time.

But maybe not. Let’s go back to a point I made earlier, that environmental politics is all about the values and aspirations that inform our debates about natural resources. There is a fault line in the Republican Party and the nation at large between values speaking to prudent restraint and those speaking to individual freedom, between aspirations speaking to heritage preservation and those speaking to economic development.

The fault line has come to the fore in dramatic fashion in recent weeks. A political brush fire has been burning out West and it’s caught national attention. Hunters and fishermen, who are mostly conserva-

tive and mostly Republican, have had some choice words about the Bush administration's management – or mismanagement, if you will – of national forests and other public lands.

There is a strong sense of betrayal running through the remarks, which the press has picked up. Greg Petrich is an example. Mr. Petrich is a registered Republican from Alaska. He organized a petition signed by 470 hunting and gun clubs across the U.S., 40 from Texas, demanding that the administration protect the Tongass National Forest, one of the largest expanses of intact temperate rainforest left on Earth. The Tongass, by the way, was established by Theodore Roosevelt.

In an Op-Ed published last week in *USA Today*, Mr. Petrich said: "I respect Bush. I just can't believe he's doing this. The right thing is so obvious, it's a no-brainer."³

Another example is Ryan Busse, a gun manufacturer from Montana. Mr. Busse joined a group of outdoorsmen who lobbied against the energy bill in D.C. last week, specifically against the provisions that would loosen Clean Water Act and other regulations for oil and gas production on public lands.

He was quoted as saying: "Anybody who wants to take that away and loosen the protections of such a pristine country is an enemy of me and every hunter and fisherman I know. I voted for President Bush. I'm a lifelong Republican. I'm on the team. But our quarterback's heading us the wrong way down the field. At some point, we have to change the play-calling, or we have to change the quarterback." Powerful stuff.

These folks are not tree-hugging greenies. None of them is demanding an end to economic uses of public lands. Nor are we. But what they want and what we want is the Republican Party leadership to rediscover stewardship and re-commit to protecting wilderness and wildlife. Angry sportsmen motivated to punish the administration could be very dangerous for the President in November. Millions of Americans hunt and fish regularly. Whether significant members of this vast constituency mobilize against the President remains to be seen.

³Jans, Nick. "Conservative Sportsmen Turn Against Bush." *USA Today*. January 28, 2004.

Like much else, predicting the outcome November 2 is like predicting the weather. There are a vast number of variables, of which the environment is just one. At this point, the presidential election is likely to be close and Republicans are likely to retain control of Congress.

Whether and how the environment tips the presidential outcome in key states will depend on the confluence of many factors – the closeness of the election, news events preceding the election, how motivated each candidate’s base is, and the persuasiveness of messages aimed at swing voters on the environment and other issues.

FUTURE REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP ON THE ENVIRONMENT

There is an important long-run question that will bear consideration long after the 2004 election is over. Can the Republican Party find its way back to a positive, constructive leadership position on the environment? Economics may point the way toward reconciliation.

In a competitive global environment, quality of life matters. Communities with forests, rivers, and wildlife nearby attract people and companies who could readily locate elsewhere. The environment has been called a “second paycheck” that spurs economic vitality and rising land values. This has been documented empirically. Any long-term economic development strategy must include protection of the natural capital that makes a place worth living in.

A couple of weeks ago, I attended a clean energy conference in Portland, Oregon. The keynoters were not the usual enviro suspects. Instead, they were a conservative Republican state legislator, a conservative Republican congressman, and representatives of the Farm Bureau. They spoke about a clean environment for our grandchildren and reviving distressed rural economies through renewable energy. Not either-or. Both-and.

People want a clean environment, but not at the expense of comfort and prosperity. The good news is that there is no need for one to trump the other. But we as environmentalists – or conservationists, if you will – must make that case in clear, persuasive language that speaks to what people care about most.

It will take time to take some of the polarized sting out of environmental debates. But the environment is an issue whose

importance transcends political dividing lines. We believe that the potential for discovering environmental solutions that can be framed in ways that attract broad support is high. For the sake of our nation and our future, we must strive toward that goal.

Q & A

Q: Why do you think that environmental issues and policies are better served from a Republican platform?

A: I don't necessarily think they are always better served from a Republican platform. I think both parties have important ideas to contribute to the debate. I believe that from the Republican standpoint there are some good ideas, such as market-oriented environmental policy. Markets can't do everything, but they do have a role to play. I think the sulfur dioxide reductions that have been achieved for the 1990 Clean Air Act were an example of how a carefully drawn policy that makes use of market forces can achieve positive results. The utilities were predicting that this was going to cost \$1,000 per ton of SO₂ reduced. Well, you can now go on the various exchanges and brokerages and you can buy yourself a ton of SO₂ reduction for \$100-\$200. So the market forces drive innovation, they reward innovation, and that signals to the business community that if you can figure out a way to make this happen at a very low cost, go for it. So that's something that Republicans have to contribute to the debate.

I also think that there's a stronger role we can play on land and wildlife protection if we just pay people to do the right thing. Property owners value the idea that there is a rare species on their property, but they also want to do things with their property, so if there's a way we can balance the use of the property with a conservation system incentive, I think we ought to try it out. Again, I don't think that markets are the Holy Grail – this is not theology; this is public policy analysis. You pick the tools that get the job done.

Q: Have you ever had a call from Karl Rove?

A: Well, we have been told from sources – second, third hand sources – that we are on Karl Rove's, how do I put this delicately, fertilizer list. We heard that. He does not interact with us. Frankly, I have been look-

ing forward to the day when I get that phone call from one of his hit men – the guy he pays to crack heads, which all politicians have, by the way. Democrats and Republicans, they all have head crackers on their staff. That’s how you get things done. But I’m still waiting for the day when one of those head crackers calls and says, “Hey, you guys, back off.” We’re going to tell them “No, we’re not going to back off.” If that means we don’t have any influence in the White House, so be it, but we like to think of ourselves as an edgy outfit. When Republicans do good things, we’re very public about it. When we do bad things, we’re also very public about it. Call it tough love, if you will. Sometimes we treat these Republican politicians like 16-year olds who haven’t yet earned the right to the car keys. They’ve got to show that they deserve that right. So no, they have not earned it . . . and will they? It’s hard to say.