

Crimes Against Nature: A Perspective On the Bush Administration's Environmental Policies

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I have been an environmental advocate for twenty years, and during that time I've been very disciplined about being bipartisan in everything I do on the environment. I've supported Republicans – from the state of Connecticut, I've worked with Congressman Christopher Shays because we have been working on the same issues. I've worked very closely with and supported Governor Pataki from New York and senators like Olympia Snowe (R-ME), John Chaffee (R-RI), Lincoln Chaffee (R-RI) and my cousin Arnold Schwarzeneger, Governor of California.

I don't think it's good for our country or for the environment if the environment becomes the province of one party, and I don't think there is any such thing as Republican children and Democratic children.

REPUBLICANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

When Newt Gingrich and the 104th Congress took over in 1995, environmentalists had no support from the Republican Party, or very little, and the support we did receive from northeast congressional Republicans was critical to the movement. At the time, most of the environmental leaders got the message that we really needed to

cultivate strong support from both political parties. But five years ago, if you had asked leaders from the twenty largest environmental groups what the greatest threat to the global environment was, you would have received a range of answers: global warming, over-population, toxins, etc. Today you would get, almost unanimously, a single answer, and that would be George W. Bush. There's no way you can talk honestly about the environment today in almost any context without being critical of the president. This is the worst environmental president we've had in our history. If you look at the Natural Resources Defense Council's (NRDC) website, you'll see that there are over 400 major environmental rollbacks that have either been passed over the past three years or are being promoted today.

If even a fraction of the rollbacks that are currently being promoted by this administration are implemented — and some of the worst ones already have been — by this time next year we will effectively have no significant federal environmental laws left in our country. That's not exaggeration. That's not hyperbole. It is a fact. Many of our laws will remain on the books in one form or another, but they will be unenforceable and we will be like Mexico, which has these wonderful poetic environmental laws but nobody knows about them and they are not enforced.

CLEAN AIR AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH

There are many ways this is affecting our lives on the community level. About six months ago there was an article in the *New York Times* stating that one out of every four black children in New York City now has asthma. There was an article last week that said that one out of every two children in homeless shelters has asthma. Well, I have three boys with asthma, and I didn't have asthma in my generation, and we don't know where this asthma epidemic is coming from. I talked with Dr. Hugh Samson, who is a national authority on asthma, a couple of weeks ago, and he says the asthma levels have doubled again over the last five years. We don't know why this is happening, whether it's affecting all industrial nations or whether it's from hormones in our food, or antibiotics, or diesel or something that all of us are being subjected to that's causing this reaction in our children's immune systems. We don't know if it's happening at birth. But we do know that most asthma attacks are caused by two components of air pollution: ozone and particulate matter. We know that in the northeast approximately

50 percent of those materials are coming from 1,100 coal-burning power plants, those antiquated plants in the Ohio Valley that are discharging those components illegally. It's been illegal for many years and, in some cases, for ten or fifteen years or more.

The Clinton administration brought 51 criminal and civil prosecutions against 51 of those power companies. They had 70 criminal investigations ongoing when Clinton left office. But this is an industry that donated \$48 million to the Bush presidential campaign in 2000 and they've donated \$58 million since. As repayment, one of the first things the Bush administration did when they came into office was to drop all those lawsuits. A few weeks ago they officially announced that they were going to drop the New Source Performance Standards altogether. Nothing like this has ever happened in American history before – where an industry buys its way with a donation to a presidential candidate out of a criminal prosecution. Then the President threw out the New Source Performance Standards, which is the heart and soul of the Clean Air Act. That basically threw the Clean Air Act out of the government. Those plants will never, under the President's scheme, have to clean up their ozone and particulates. Never.

MERCURY POLLUTION FROM POWER PLANTS

I work on the New York City reservoir system, and I've worked on protecting New York City's drinking water for almost twenty years. New York's drinking water comes mainly from the Catskill Mountains, 120 miles north of the city. It's the largest unfiltered water supply of any municipality in the country and it's really good water. New York's water is bottled and sold in other cities. Those reservoir systems have been protected for one hundred years from any kind of industrial development. But about six months ago we learned that all the fish in the reservoir system are too contaminated with mercury to eat. I live two miles from the state of Connecticut. It's now unsafe to eat any freshwater fish in Connecticut with one exception – hatchery bred trout. The same is true in seventeen other states because of mercury contamination. Well, there's no geological source for that mercury here in the state of Connecticut. That mercury is coming down from the sky, and 40 percent of the mercury emissions in this country are being discharged by those same 1,100 power plants in the Ohio Valley and they are doing it illegally.

We've learned a lot about mercury and what it is doing to people over the past five or ten years. The National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention came out with both of the major studies on mercury contamination, showing that one out of every 12 American women has so much mercury in her womb that her children are at risk for permanent brain damage, permanent causative impairment. I got my mercury levels tested recently. My levels are about 11 parts per billion, which is more than double that of the action levels when you would expect to see some kind of causative impairment in children. If women have those levels, the child is actually getting double those levels through the umbilical cord.

I asked Dr. David Carpenter from the Public Health School at the State University of New York in Albany, a national authority on mercury contamination, what it means that I have 11 parts per billion. He said that, as an adult male, it will probably have some impact ultimately on my memory, but if I were a woman of childbearing years and had a child, that child would have causative impairment. I said, "You mean they *might* have causative impairment?" and he responded "No, the science is really clear on this now that at those levels they almost certainly would have causative impairment – permanent IQ loss." Typically five to seven IQ points would be lost. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 600,000 children born in this country every year have been subjected to those levels of mercury, which also causes an inventory of other diseases including autism, blindness and heart disease, kidney and liver disease, etc.

The Clinton administration learned all these things about mercury and classified mercury as a Hazardous Air Pollutant under the Clean Air Act. That automatically triggered a section of the Act requiring those coal-burning power plants to remove 90 percent of mercury from their discharges within three and a half years. According to the utilities themselves, that would cost less than one percent of the value of those plants. That seems like a very good deal for the American people. But it's the same utilities and coal industries that gave all that money to the Bush administration.

The Bush administration came in and threw out those regulations and replaced them with regulations that were written verbatim by an industry law firm. The Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation at EPA came out of that law firm. This is one of the things that's happening with our government – the lobbyists for these regulated indus-

tries are now running regulatory agencies. The head of the Bureau of Land Management is a mining industry lobbyist. The head of the Forest Service is a timber industry lobbyist. The second in command at EPA is a Monsanto lobbyist, and if you look at all of the deputy secretaries, under secretaries, assistant secretaries, virtually all of those positions have now been filled by lobbyists from the very industries they are meant to regulate.

Here we are living in what I consider to be a science fiction nightmare, where we are bringing children into a world where the air is too poisonous for them to breathe and my children and the children of millions of other parents who live in seventeen states can't even eat fresh fish caught in their states.

Where millions of children who are living under those conditions, including all the children in Connecticut, could no longer engage in the central primal activity of American youth which is go fishing with their father or mother and come home and eat the fish, because the fish in this state are too contaminated to eat because somebody gave a contribution to a politician.

I live three and a half hours south of the Adirondacks. I go fishing in the Adirondacks all the time. The Adirondacks is the oldest protected wilderness area on the planet. It's been protected since 1888 as wilderness, forever wild. But today half of the Adirondacks are now sterilized because of acid rain, which has also ruined the forest cover on the high peaks of the Appalachians all the way from Georgia up to Canada. Acid rain is from the same coal burning power plants that the Bush administration has let off the hook from statutory requirements that would lower the emissions that cause acid rain.

COAL MINING IN APPALACHIA

In May I flew over the coalmines in Kentucky where the coal is coming from – this is the other half of the industry. If the American people could see what I saw in Kentucky, there would be a revolution in this country. If they tried to do this in California or any other place in the Rocky Mountains they couldn't get away with it, but they can get

away with it in Appalachia because of the nature of the communities there. They are literally cutting down mountain ranges. There is an area the size of Delaware that will be gone within ten years. They've already destroyed 500,000 acres, permanently destroyed them, and this isn't just damaged – this is gone forever. The streams are gone, the rivers are gone, the topography is gone, the forests are gone, and they will never return. They are using 25,000 tons of dynamite every single day and they are using these giant machines called Dragon Lines. They cost half a million dollars each and are so colossal that they can almost dispense with the need for human labor.

When I was a boy, my father was fighting coal mining and strip mining in Appalachia. He often told me about these machines that were being used to get rid of the unions, this new method of mining where they don't build tunnels and use men, but they cut down the whole mountain range to get the seam or the vein. At that time there were 120,000 miners in West Virginia. Today there are 14,000 mining the same amount of coal, but they don't belong to a union because these companies don't hire them. I flew *under* one of these Dragon Lines, twenty-two stories high. I could look up – I was in a little Cessna 172 – and I could look up and see the man in the cab driving it above me. They blow up the mountaintop and these machines are a giant backhoe. They just pile this stuff into the adjacent river valleys and bury the rivers. There are already 1,200 rivers gone. This is illegal. You cannot dump rock and debris into a river in this country. It's been illegal since we passed the Clean Water Act and in most states before that. But they were doing it anyway. Joe Lovett, my friend who is an attorney down there, brought a lawsuit, and a federal judge ruled that that this was illegal. They couldn't do it. He stopped all the mountaintop mining in Kentucky and West Virginia. Two days after they got that order, the Bush administration changed the law. They reversed 30 years of the Clean Water Act with a flick of the pen. Today, dumping debris into water basins is legal in this country.

SUPERFUND

I fought for twenty years to clean up PCBs in the Hudson River, and last year we finally got a conviction. We pressured EPA to order General Electric to clean up the PCBs in the Hudson and the science confirms that, if they clean them up, we will be able to eat some of the

fish in the Hudson within two years. If they don't clean them up, we won't be able to eat any of the species for over a hundred years. So we finally forced the EPA after three decades of battling to clean up the river, but our victory was short-lived.

In October, Superfund (a government fund created to support the clean up of toxic waste sites) went bankrupt because the Bush administration refused to renew the tax on the oil industry that supports it. Let me be clear. Nobody cares about this tax in the industry. It's infinitesimal, but it creates enough money to fund Superfund. A lot of people think that the purpose of the Superfund money is to clean up these sites. Actually the real purpose of Superfund is a leverage to force reluctant companies to clean up their own mess. If a big corporation refuses to clean up its Superfund site, EPA can go in and use Superfund money to clean it up itself and then bill the corporation to cover damages. That's the only reason any Superfund site is ever cleaned up in this country – because the EPA has that threat in its back pocket. Well, guess what? That threat doesn't exist any more because the Bush administration has allowed Superfund to go bankrupt.

I'm not fighting about the environment for the sake of the fishes and the birds, but because nature is the infrastructure of our community. We must create communities for our children that provide them with the same opportunities, dignity, and enrichment as the communities that our parents gave us. We've got to start by protecting our environmental infrastructure: i.e., the air we breathe, the water that we drink, the wildlife, the landscape that enriches and connects us to our environment. In the case of the Appalachians, we're taking down this historic mountain range where Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone rode and that connects us to our history and links us to generations of Americans. We're cutting them to the ground so that these coal companies can make a little bit more money and meanwhile poison the children here in Connecticut and the rest of us as well.

CONSERVING COMMUNITIES

I work for Riverkeeper and I work for a large environmental group called the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). I've worked for them both during the last twenty years, and the NRDC has been on the forefront of first helping to write our environmental laws and then defending them against this assault by the Bush administration. But the people that I work for at Riverkeeper were people who understood from the beginning that we're protecting our environment for the sake of our communities, for our livelihoods, and for our retirement. It was started back in the 1960s by a blue-collar coalition of commercial and recreational fishermen who both realized the importance of reclaiming the Hudson back from its polluters. We have on the Hudson one of the oldest commercial fisheries in North America, 350 years old. Many of the people I represent come from families who have been fishing the river continuously since Dutch Colonial times. It's a traditional era fishery. They use the same fishing nets, the small holes, ash holes, and gill nets that were taught by the Algonquin Indians to the original Dutch settlers in New Amsterdam and then passed down through the generations.

There's a little village called Crotonville, New York, which is 30 miles north of the city on the east bank of the Hudson River and is the heart of commercial fishing in the region. The people who lived there in 1966 — when I was your prototypical, tweed-jacketed, pipe smoking, bearded, affluent environmentalist who was trying to protect distant wilderness areas in the Rockies or Montana — were factory workers, carpenters, laborers, and electricians. Half the people in Crotonville made their living, or at least some part of it, fishing or crabbing on the Hudson. Most of them had little expectation that they would ever see environmentalists because we were mostly working on the national fronts. For them, the environment was their backyard. It was the days at the beaches, the swimming holes, the fishing holes in the Hudson. Then in 1966, Penn Central Railroad began pumping oil from Florida by pipeline and the oil went out the river with the tides, blackened the beaches, and shad tasted like diesel so they couldn't be sold to the fish market in the city.

In response, all the people in Crotonville got together in the American Legion Hall. This is a very patriotic community. In fact, they had a higher mortality rate during World War II than any community

in our country. Almost all the original founders, board members, and officers of Riverkeeper were former marines. They were combat veterans from World War II and Korea. These weren't radicals, they weren't militants, they were people whose patriotism was rooted in this part of our country. But that night they started talking about violence because they saw something that they thought they owned, which was the abundance of these fisheries that their parents had exploited for generations, and the purity of the Hudson's waters, and it was being robbed from them by large corporate entities over which they had no control. They had been to government agencies that are supposed to protect Americans from pollution – the Army Corps of Engineers, the Conservation Department, and the Coast Guard – and they were given the bum's rush. They got together in the American Legion Hall in March of 1966, and three hundred people were convinced (almost every resident of Crotonville was convinced) that the government was in collusion with the polluters and that the only way they were going to reclaim the river for themselves was if they confronted the polluters directly.

Somebody suggested that they put a match to the oil slick coming out of the Penn Central pipe or another pipe; somebody else said they should jam a mattress up the pipe and flood the rail yard with its own waste; somebody else suggested putting dynamite at the input power plant, which at that time was killing a million fish at the intakes and taking food off their family's tables. And then a guy stood up. His name was Bob Will. He was the outdoor editor of *Sports Illustrated* magazine and a Korean War veteran, and he had discovered an ancient navigational statute called the 1880 Rivers and Harbors Act while he was researching an article for *Sports Illustrated* about angling in the Hudson. Bob had written a half dozen books about angling and had come up with this ancient navigational statute that said it was illegal to pollute any waterway in the U.S. You'd have to pay a high penalty if you got caught, but there was also a bounty that said that anyone who turned in a violator would get half the fine.

When most of the community members were talking about violence, he stood up in front of them with a copy of this law and he said to them, "You know, we shouldn't talk about violence." He had actually sent a copy of this law to lawyers and they sent him a memo back saying that in eighty years it had never been enforced but it was still on the books. Bob Will stood up in front of them and said, "We

shouldn't be talking about breaking the law, we should be talking about *enforcing* it."

That evening they started a group that was then called the Hudson River Fishing Association and later became Riverkeeper, the group that would go out and track down and prosecute all the polluters on the Hudson. Eighteen months later they collected the first bounty under that law in U.S. history.

They shut down the Penn Central pipeline for good. There was two weeks of wild celebration in the town. They got to keep \$2,000. Spent it on beer. But in 1973 they collected the highest penalty in U.S. history against a corporate polluter. They got \$200,000 from Anaconda Wire and Cable and they used that money to construct a boat, called Riverkeeper, which today patrols the river tracking down polluters.

The Hudson at the time was a national joke. Today it's the richest water body in the North Atlantic. There's more pounds of fish per acre, more biomass per gallon, than in any other waterway. I started working for Riverkeeper in 1983 and since then we've brought over 300 successful law suits on the Hudson and forced polluters to spend more than \$3 billion remediating the river. The Hudson is now the last big river system left on both sides of the Atlantic that still has spawning sites for all its historical species of migratory fish. It is Noah's Ark, a species warehouse. The resurrection of the Hudson has inspired the creation of Riverkeepers all across our country. Most of our Riverkeeper groups are representing fishermen, and these are people that run the political spectrum, from rightwing Republicans to leftwing Democrats and everything in between. I go out on boats with the commercial fishermen sometimes. I go to the bait shacks on the Hudson at the end of the day and just listen to them talk.

Without exception, they see what's happening with the Bush White House as the greatest threat to their livelihood, not only their livelihood but also their sense of values, their sense of citizenship, and their sense of community.

What they invariably say is that choosing between economic prosperity on the one hand and environmental protection on the other is a false choice. In 100 percent of the situations, good environmental policy is identical to good economic

policy. If we want to measure our economy, we should measure it based on the dignity of the jobs over the generations and how they preserve the assets of our community.

If on the other hand, we do what they've urged us to do in the White House, which is to treat the planet as if it were a business liquidation, converting our natural resources into cash as quickly as possible, we could generate an instantaneous cash flow and the illusion of a prosperous economy. But our children are going to pay for our joy ride. And they're going to live with denuded landscapes, poor health, huge clean-up costs. And they're never going to be able to pay.

Environmental injury is deficit spending. It's a way of loading the costs of our generation's prosperity onto the backs of our children.

A LOOK BACK TO THE '60s AND '70s

We just celebrated the 34th anniversary of Earth Day; all of our environmental investments began on Earth Day. I remember what it was like before Earth Day. I remember the Ticonderoga River burning with flames that were eight stories high and nobody was able to put out. I remember that I couldn't swim in the Hudson, the Charles, the Potomac, when they declared them dead. I remember what the air smelled like in Washington, D.C., when I was a boy, which wasn't even an industrial city. We had to dust our home every day for the soot. Some days you couldn't see down the block because of the smog. Thousands of Americans died in our cities every year because of smog, yet these young policymakers don't remember that these days. They don't see the benefits our people have gotten through our investments in our environmental infrastructure. All they see is the costs of compliance and their campaign contributions.

I'll tell you another personal experience of mine. I'm a falconer, which means that I train hawks. I've been doing this since I was eleven.

I'm licensed, I'm a master falconer with the federal government, and I have written a book on falconry. I breed hawks, and of course I train them, and I have a rehabilitation center of my own for continued support. I have been interested in hawks – my mother says obsessed – since I was about three years old. Beginning when I was nine years old, I used to go to Washington maybe every two weeks with nine or ten of my brothers and sisters, eat lunch with my father at the Justice Department, or occasionally visit my uncle at the White House. Whenever I go to Washington, D.C. I always look down Pennsylvania Avenue to the old post office building, because on the roof there was a pair of Eastern Peregrine Falcons, the most spectacular predatory bird in North America. It was the most beautiful species, with salmon pink and beautiful white around its neck, and it could fly 240 miles an hour, the fastest bird on earth. There had been a pair at the old post office building for generations. I watched them fly off the roof of the post office and come down Pennsylvania Avenue with those speeds and pick pigeons out of the air, 40 feet above the heads of the magistrates, right in front of the White House, and then fly them back to the cupola at the top of the post office. To me, seeing a sight like that was far more exciting than seeing my uncle at the White House.

That's a sight my children will never see, because that bird went extinct in 1963 from DDT poisoning, the same year my uncle was killed. We do have falcons back on the east coast, but it's a different bird, it's a high-priced progeny of seventeen different sub-species that were mixed and matched and bred in captivity and released into the wild. It's nowhere near as spectacular in my mind as this creature, which took a million years to evolve and then disappeared in the blink of an eye because of ignorance and greed.

FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND A FREE MARKET ECONOMY

In 1970, this accumulation of insults drove 20 million Americans out in the street, 10 percent of our population, in the largest public demonstration in U.S. history, demanding that our political leaders return to the American people the ancient environmental rights that had been stolen from our citizens over the previous eighty years. And the political system responded. Republicans and Democrats got together and Nixon created the EPA, signed environmental laws, and for the next ten years we as a country passed 28 major environmental

laws to protect our air, water, and endangered species. Those laws in turn became a model for over 120 nations from around the world that have their own versions of them and began to make their own investments in their environmental infrastructures.

One of the other things they love to say on Capitol Hill is that we can get rid of the federal EPA, the federal environmental laws, and return control to the states and then we'll have state's rights, we'll have community control again, local control. You remember how well that worked for the civil rights movement. Local control, that's the essence of democracy, right? And the states are in the best position to control and police and protect their own environment, right? But the real outcome of that demolition will not be local control; it will be *corporate* control, because these large multinationals can so easily dominate state political landscapes. We remember the Hudson Valley in the 1960s before we had these federal environmental laws.

This general tale can be told 10,000 times across our country, everywhere and in every community. On the Hudson, General Electric came in to the poverty-stricken towns in upstate New York, Fort Edwards, Hudson Falls, and they said to the community leaders: "We're going to build you a spanking new factory and we're going to bring in 1,500 new jobs. We're going to raise your taxes and all you have to do is waive your environmental laws and let us dump our toxic PCB's in the Hudson. And if you don't do it, we're going to move to New Jersey and we'll do it from across the river and you'll still get the PCBs, but they'll get the jobs and taxes." Two decades later General Electric closed the factory, fired the workers, and left the Hudson Valley with their pockets stuffed with cash, the richest corporation in the history of mankind. They also left behind a \$2 billion clean-up bill that nobody in Hudson Valley can afford.

There are thousands of commercial fishermen, my clients, who are permanently out of work because, although the Hudson is loaded with

fish, the fish are still loaded with General Electric's PCBs and they are too toxic to legally sell on the market. Every woman between New York City and Albany now has elevated levels of PCBs in her breast milk, and everybody in the Hudson Valley has General Electric's PCBs in our flesh and in our water systems. My levels are about double that of what a normal person's would be who lived elsewhere.

The federal environmental laws were meant to put an end to that kind of corporate blackmail and to stop these corporations from coming in and slip-sliding one community against another in New Jersey or one in Connecticut against another in Rhode Island, to lower their environmental standards.

I want to make two more points. One is that there's no one who's a stronger advocate for free market capitalism than myself. I believe that the free market is the most efficient and democratic way to distribute the goods of the land. If we had a real free market economy in this country, we would not have pollution, it would be reduced enormously. The free market makes us use natural resources efficiently. It puts true value on those resources. Efficiency eliminates waste. Waste is pollution. The best thing that can happen for the environment is if we have a true free market economy.

Look at what General Electric did, what all polluters do. When General Electric dumped their PCBs in the Hudson, they were avoiding the full cost of bringing their product to market, which was the cost of properly disposing of a dangerous process chemical. By doing that, they beat their competitors and satisfied shareholders, but the cost didn't disappear. It went to the fish and it made the people sick, it put the men out of work and it dried up the barge traffic, it took land off the tax rolls and it forced all these communities on the Hudson to build expensive drug treatment plants, and all these impacts imposed costs on the rest of us. This surely isn't a true free market economy. But what GE did is what all polluters do – they use political clout to escape the discipline of the free market and force the public to pay their production costs.

What all federal environmental laws are meant to do is to establish a free market economy in America by forcing people to internalize the costs of production.

I don't even consider myself an environmentalist any more. I'm a free marketer and I go out into the marketplace and I catch the people who are cheating and I say to them, "We're going to force you to internalize your costs the same way you internalize your profits, because when somebody cheats the free market, it distorts the entire marketplace and none of us gets the benefits, the efficiencies, the democracy of a free market economy otherwise promised by our country."

CONCLUSION

As I said earlier, the reason we protect nature is not for the sake of the fishes and the birds. It's for our own sake, because nature enriches us. It's the infrastructure of our community, it's the base of our economy, and we forged that at our peril. But it also enriches us culturally, historically, and spiritually. Human beings have other appetites besides money, and if we don't feed them, we're not going to grow up. We're not going to become the kind of beings that our Creator intended us to become. When we destroy nature, we diminish ourselves. We impoverish our children.

You know those ancient forests in the Pacific Northwest? We're preserving those trees because we believe that trees have more value to humanity standing than if you cut them down. I fight for the Hudson not for the sake of the shad, the sturgeon, and the striped bass, but because I believe that my life will be richer and my children and my community will be richer if we live in a world where there are shads, sturgeons, and striped bass. My children can see the fish out of their tiny boats, doing what they have been doing for generations. They touch them when they come to shore to wait out the tides, and by doing that connect themselves to 350 years of New York State history and understand that they are part of something larger than themselves.

They are part of a continuum, part of a community. I want my children to grow up in a world where there are commercial fishing nets on the Hudson, not where 400-ton factory trawlers 100 miles off shore are strip-mining the ocean with no interface with humanity.

We've lost touch with the seasons and the tides and the things that connect us with 10,000 generations of human beings and connect us all to God. I don't believe that nature is God, but I do believe it is the way that God communicates with us. God talks to human beings through many factors – through organized religion, through the great books of those religions, through wise people, through art, literature, music, and poetry – but nowhere with such clarity and force and detail and texture and grace and joy as in nature.

Q & A

Q: I know Kerry is highly rated by the League of Conservation Voters, but how would he be appreciably better than the current regime?

A: John Kerry has the highest ranking of the League of Conservation Voters. The Republicans are saying in their ads that he doesn't stand for anything, but he has stood stronger on these issues than anybody else in the U.S. Senate since he got into the Senate. He has been our best friend, our champion. He has a 96 percent League of Conservation Voters lifetime approval rating compared to Al Gore's 64 percent. He organized Earth Day in 1970 in Massachusetts. He's been the Chairman on the Arctic Wildlife Federation. I can guarantee you that they would be drilling today in the Arctic if it weren't for John Kerry.

Kerry's also been a champion of the effort to increase the Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) standards. There's nothing more that we can do, there's nothing better that we can do for this country right now than to increase these standards. Fifty percent of the energy we use in this country is wasted, and if we raise fuel efficiency by one mile a gallon it's two wildlife refuges of oil. If we raise it by 2.6 miles per gallon, that's all the oil in Iraq and Kuwait combined. If we raise it by 7.6 miles per gallon, that's all the oil that we import today from the Persian Gulf. We could eliminate 100 percent of the Persian Gulf imports by improving CAFE standards.

I drive a minivan that gets 22 miles per gallon and I spend \$3,000 a year on gasoline, which is a lot. Most people spend about \$1,200, but

if I had a 40 mile per gallon car, I would have \$1,300 in my pocket at the end of every year. Think about that kind of economic stimulus package. You remember when Bush sent us a \$300 check and that was supposed to be a stimulus? What if we were all getting \$400-\$500 every single year forever? Think about what that would do for our economy. Plus, if we weren't buying oil from the sheiks in the Gulf, we would not have been in the first Gulf War. And if we weren't in the first Gulf War, Osama Bin Laden would not have declared war on us and there wouldn't have been a trip to Saudi Arabia and the World Trade Center would still be standing, etc., etc., etc. You can play that out, and people will say that it is unfair to judge, but it isn't.

The choices we're making regarding how we use energy and how we regulate these big energy users in our country, like the automobile industry, have a profound impact socially and environmentally, but also on our foreign policy, our domestic policy, and our economy. It's the most important energy policy, the most important domestic policy, the most important foreign policy, to get rid of our dependence on foreign oil. The fastest way to do that is not drilling in the Arctic. We could never drill our way out of oil dependence in this country because we use 25 percent of the oil in the world and we only have two percent of the reserves. So we can't do it. It's impossible. But we can dramatically reduce our dependence by conservation. It's the quickest, easiest, cheapest and cleanest way to extract oil, which is to get it from the stuff we are already burning.