THE ENVIRONMENT: A CLEANER, SAFER, HEALTHIER AMERICA

The core of the Democrat argument depends on the belief that ***"Washington regulations"*** represent the best way to preserve the environment. We don't agree.

1) ***First, assure your audience that you are committed to "preserving and protecting" the environment, but that "it can be done more wisely and effectively."*** (Absolutely do not raise economic arguments first.) Tell them a personal story from your life. Since many Americans believe Republicans do not care about the environment, ***you will never convince people to accept your ideas until you confront this suspicion and put it to rest.***

2) ***Provide specific examples of federal bureaucrats failing to meet their responsibilities to protect the environment.*** Do not attack the ***principles*** behind existing legislation. Focus instead on the way it is enforced or carried out, and use rhetorical questions.

3) ***Your plan must be put in terms of the future, not the past or present.*** We are carrying forward a legacy, yes, but we are trying to make things ***even better*** for the future. ***The environment is an area in which people expect progress,*** and when they do not see progress being made, they get frustrated.

4) ***The three words Americans are looking for in an environmental policy, they are "safer," "cleaner," and "healthier."*** Two words that summarize what Americans are expecting from regulators and agencies are "***accountability***" and "***responsibility***."

5) ***Stay away from "risk assessment," "cost-benefit analysis," and the other traditional environmental terminology used by industry and corporations.*** Your constituents don't know what those terms mean, and they will then assume that you are pro-business.

6) ***If you must use the economic argument, stress that you are seeking "a fair balance" between the environment and the economy.*** Be prepared to specify and quantify the jobs lost because of needless, excessive or redundant regulations.

7) ***Describe the limited role for Washington.*** We must ***thoroughly review*** the environmental regulations already in place, decide which ones we still need, identify those which no longer make sense, and make sure we don't add any unnecessary rules. Washington should disclose the ***expected cost*** of current and all new environmental regulations. ***The public has a right to know.***

8) ***Emphasize common sense.*** In making regulatory decisions, we should use best estimates and ***realistic assumptions***, not the worst-case scenarios advanced by environmental extremists.

OVERVIEW

The environment is probably the single issue on which Republicans in general – and President Bush in particular – are most vulnerable. A caricature has taken hold in the public imagination: Republicans seemingly in the pockets of corporate fat cats who rub their hands together and chuckle manically as they plot to pollute America for fun and profit. And only the Democrats and their good-hearted friends from Washington can save America from these sinister companies drooling at the prospect of strip mining every picturesque mountain range, drilling for oil on every white sand beach, and clear cutting every green forest.

The fundamental problem for Republicans when it comes to the environment is that whatever you say is viewed through the prism of suspicion. As with education, Social Security and so many other issues, the Democrats have been expert at constructing a narrative in which Republicans and conservatives are the bad guys. And if Americans swallow that story, then whatever comes later is mere detail.

Indeed, it can be helpful to think of environmental (and other) issues in terms of "story." A compelling story, even if factually inaccurate, can be more emotionally compelling than a dry recitation of the truth. The popular movie *Erin Brockovich* presented a courageous woman fighting against an impersonal corporation that poisoned the public with cancerous chemicals with impunity. *The Wall Street Journal* and investigative journalist Michael Fumento later conclusively demonstrated that the real-life Erin Brockovich's legal case was full of holes and contradictions, but no matter: the public had it's emotional story, and no number of exposes will ever come close to matching the power of that story.

As with those other issues, the first (and most important) step to neutralizing the problem and eventually bringing people around to your point of view on environmental issues is to convince them of your ***sincerity*** and ***concern***. You may come up with the most subtle, nuanced, brilliant, ironclad and indisputable argument as to why President Bush's approach to the "arsenic in the water" issue was responsible and correct, but it will fall on deaf ears unless the public is willing to give you the benefit of the doubt at the beginning.

I don't have to remind you how often Republicans are depicted as cold, uncaring, ruthless, even downright anti-social. These attacks appeal to resentment and fear. Because they are primarily emotional in nature, they cannot be blunted with logic or statistics. Therefore, ***any discussion of the environment has to be grounded in an effort to reassure a skeptical public that you care about the environment for its own sake*** – that your intentions are strictly honorable. Otherwise, all the rational arguments in the world won't be enough for you to prevail.

The good news, amidst all this doom and gloom, is that once you *are* able to establish your environmental *bona fides*, once you show people that your heart is in the right place and make them comfortable listening to what you have to say, then the conservative, free market approach to the environment actually has the potential to be quite popular.

ON THE MATTER OF ARSENIC IN THE WATER

I start here because this is where we almost snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. As you know, the incoming Bush administration's judicious, prudent approach to the numerous "midnight" regulations imposed by Bill Clinton on his way out the door ended up backfiring in a big way. The *"arsenic in the water"* imbroglio of spring 2001 was the biggest public relations misfire of President Bush's first year in office.

What was the chaos all about? The Bush Administration's suspension of Clinton's last-minute executive order toughening the federal standard for arsenic in drinking water from 50 parts per billion to 10 parts per billion.

The Democrats' message came through loud and clear: Bush and the Republicans put business interests above public health. The fact that the new administration was only delaying a change that hadn't been considered urgent enough for the Clinton administration to do anything about it for eight long years got lost in the hubbub.

Indeed, the story was not that Bush was delaying a hastily imposed regulation, but rather that he was actively ***putting in more*** arsenic in the water. Republicans pointing out that the Democrats were distorting the facts…and pointed this out…and pointed this out…and pointed this out again… but the facts didn't matter. The hit had been scored, the political damage done, and that was the first chink in President Bush's approval ratings.

Again, let me emphasize: The facts were beside the point. ***Facts only become relevant when the public is receptive and willing to listen to them.*** The decision to suspend the regulation wouldn't be troubling to someone educated on the issue, to someone who knew that there already was arsenic in the water and the only thing being debated was whether it was necessary to reduce it, and by how much. But Americans didn't know that. They heard *"arsenic in the water,"* and it was news to them. No wonder that they reacted in horror.

How do we avoid such debacles in the future?

It's all in how you frame your argument, and the order in which you present your facts. Don't allow yourself to become bogged down in minutiae when you should be presenting the big picture. You should have the details at hand to back you up, to be sure, but don't be afraid to begin by painting in broad strokes.

A more effective, step-by-step approach to ***educating*** the public about the arsenic issue would have been:

THE "ARSENIC" COMMUNICATION LADDER

1. Every American has the right to clean, healthy and safe drinking water.

2. Republicans are dedicated to the continued improvement of our nation's water supply, and to ensuring that Americans have the best quality water available. We all drink water. We all want it safe and clean.

3. Today, there are minute, tiny amounts of arsenic in our drinking water. It has always been this way. It will always be this way.

4. Based on sound science, the government's standard is that there should be no more than 50 parts of arsenic per billion.

5. In the last weeks before Bill Clinton left office, he issued an executive order reducing the standard from 50 to 10 parts of arsenic per billion – but he did not act for eight years because it was neither a priority nor a health risk.

6. Before this new standard takes effect, we would like to make sure that it is necessary to make this change. The decision was reached quickly, without public debate, and without evidence that this change will make our water appreciably safer.

Points one and two above may sound like boilerplate to you, but they are the ***most important element*** in arguing about this and similar issues. Talking about the environment is no different than explaining your position on taxes, Social Security, or the war on terrorism: Begin with your fundamental, guiding principles, explain where you are coming from and what your ultimate ends and intentions are, and only then delve into the particulars of your case.

Although President Bush ultimately adopted the Clinton administration standard of 10 parts per billion in November 2001, the arsenic issue should be a lesson to all Republicans. Remember, ***the burden of proof is on you to prove your good intentions and your sincerity.*** Reassure the public on those counts, and ***only then*** will they see the Democrats' demagoguery for what it is.

Note: The day President Bush made his subsequent announcement accepting the new regulation, the Democrats immediately began harping on the Clinton standard, claiming that 10 parts per billion was too high, and that the new arsenic standard should actually be changed to three parts per billion.

No one wants polluted air and water, yet that's what a majority of Americans think Republicans stand for. ***When we talk about "rolling back regulations" involving the environment, we are sending a signal Americans don't support.*** If we suggest that the choice is between environmental protection and deregulation, the environment will win consistently.

GETTING BACK TO NATURE

> **"I'm usually the one running around the house shutting off lights, making sure the water is turned off. Still, when I think environmentalist – I'm sorry if someone is offended by this – I think of somebody chaining themselves to a tree."**
>
> **– Pittsburgh woman**

The most popular federal programs today are those that preserve and protect our natural heritage through ***conservation of public lands and waters through parks and open spaces.***

Americans love the outdoors. Becoming a champion of national parks and forests – and protecting American culture and history with sound policies for carrying these legacies to the next generations of Americans – is the best way to show our citizens that Republicans can be ***FOR*** something positive on the environment. Being ***AGAINST*** existing laws or regulations has been translated into being ***AGAINST*** the environment.

Preserving parks and open spaces is a winner because it doesn't need to be explained to everyday Americans. We need more issues like this. No matter how many experts know that Superfund law or the Clean Water Act or Clean Air rules don't work as they should, the public doesn't perceive them as broken. There is not a public outcry to fix them.

That is not to say that it is unreasonable to try to "update" Superfund or to "modernize" the Clean Water Act. But you can't do that kind of heavy lifting until you win the public's trust on the basics: protecting and maintaining what we have. [Avoid terms and concepts like "providing stewardship" (passive and unclear) in favor of "preserving and protecting" (active and clear).] ***And the number one hot button to most voters is water quality*** – including both infrastructure and pollution protection.

People ***don't*** understand the technicalities of environmental law – but they ***do*** understand the benefits of conservation of water, land, and open spaces. Republicans need to focus more on the ***benefits*** the public expects and spend less time debating ***process***, which the public really doesn't care to follow.

Public support for a trust fund for conservation of land, water and open spaces is both widespread and deep. We should not pass up the opportunity to talk about an ***"open space conservation trust fund"*** as a better response to chatter about ***"urban sprawl."*** Remember, few want the growth and development of their community determined by Washington.

But don't reject a federal role altogether. The environment knows no state or local boundaries, and the public demands at least some federal guidelines. However, people don't want an intrusive federal bureaucracy dictating local enforcement. They want the federal government to take care of the "big picture" and leave the details to the states and localities.

UPDATING WASHINGTON'S RULES ON THE ENVIRONMENT

> ***"Do you want some pencil-pushing Washington bureaucrat to tell you what to do and how to do it, someone who gets all his knowledge of the Everglades, the Rocky Mountains, and every environmental issue from the pages of*** **National Geographic?"**

While we may have lost the environmental communications battle in the past, the war is not over. When we explain our environmental proposals ***correctly***, more than 70 percent of the nation prefers our positions to those of our opponents. Let me emphasize, however, that when our environmental policies are explained ineffectively, not only do we risk losing the swing vote, but our suburban female base could abandon us as well.

The Democratic message could best be characterized as the ***"Protection Racket"*** of politics – protection of the environment, protection of education, protection of workers, protection of health care, protection of Social Security, protection of Medicare and Medicaid. "Protecting" those programs has become the Democratic mantra, and their ability to remain ***on message*** in all of their communications has reaped great rewards. And who could disagree? Having those things given to you and protected is an offer that's difficult to refuse.

As Republicans, we have the moral and rhetorical high ground when we talk about values, like ***freedom, responsibility, and accountability***. The same values apply to the environment as to other examples of government-knows-best solutions. ***But when we talk about "rolling back regulations" involving the environment, we are sending a signal Americans don't support.*** If we suggest that the choice is between environmental protection and deregulation, the environment will win consistently.

You cannot allow yourself to be labeled "anti-environment" simply because you are opposed to the current regulatory configuration (your opponents will almost certainly try to label you that way). The public does not approve of the current regulatory process, and Americans certainly don't want an increased regulatory burden, but they will put a higher priority on environmental protection and public health than on cutting regulations. Even Republicans prioritize protecting the environment.

That is why you must explain how it is possible to pursue a ***common sense*** or ***sensible*** environmental policy that ***"preserves all the gains of the past two decades"*** without going to extremes, and allows for new science and technologies to carry us even further. Give citizens the idea that ***progress is being frustrated by over-reaching government***, and you will hit a very strong strain in the American psyche.

If there must be regulation, Americans are most comfortable with local oversight. Participants respond favorably to proposals that included communities and more common sense approaches. This is important. We can uphold the environmental priorities of the American people, while at the same time moving control to the state and local level and removing needless bureaucratic meddling. People believe they know better than do nameless, faceless federal bureaucrats how to preserve and protect ***their*** local environment.

WINNING THE GLOBAL WARMING DEBATE – AN OVERVIEW

Please keep in mind the following communication recommendations as you address global warming in general, particularly as Democrats and opinion leaders attack President Bush over Kyoto.

1. ***The scientific debate remains open.*** Voters believe that there is ***no consensus*** about global warming within the scientific community. Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled, their views about global warming will change accordingly. Therefore, ***you need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue in the debate***, and defer to scientists and other experts in the field.

2. ***Americans want a free and open discussion.*** Even though Democrats savaged President Bush for formally withdrawing from the Kyoto accord, the truth is that none of them would have actually voted to ratify the treaty, and they were all glad to see it die. Emphasize the importance of ***"acting only with all the facts in hand"*** and ***"making the right decision, not the quick decision."***

3. ***Technology and innovation are the key in arguments on both sides.*** Global warming alarmists use American superiority in technology and innovation quite effectively in responding to accusations that international agreements such as the Kyoto accord could cost the United States billions. Rather than condemning corporate America the way most environmentalists have done in the past, they attack their us for lacking faith in our collective ability to meet any economic challenges presented by environmental changes we make. This should be our argument. ***We*** need to emphasize how ***voluntary*** innovation and experimentation are preferable to bureaucratic or international intervention and regulation.

4. ***The "international fairness" issue is the emotional home run.*** Given the chance, Americans will demand that all nations be part of any international global warming treaty. Nations such as China, Mexico and India would have to sign such an agreement for the majority of Americans to support it.

5. ***The economic argument should be secondary.*** Many of you will want to focus on the higher prices and lost jobs that would result from complying with Kyoto, but you can do better. Yes, when put in specific terms (food and fuel prices, for example) on an individual-by-individual basis, this argument does resonate. Yes, the fact that Kyoto would hurt the economic well being of seniors and the poor is of particular concern. However, the economic argument is less effective than each of the arguments listed above.

The most important principle in any discussion of global warming is your commitment to sound science. Americans unanimously believe all environmental rules and regulations should be based on sound science and common sense. Similarly, our confidence in the ability of science and technology to solve our nation's ills is second to none. Both perceptions will work in your favor if properly cultivated.

The scientific debate is closing [against us] but not yet closed. There is still a window of opportunity to challenge the science. Americans believe that all the strange weather that was associated with El Nino had something to do with global warming, and there is little you can do to convince them otherwise. However, only a handful of people believes the science of global warming is a closed question. Most Americans want more information so that they can make an informed decision. It is our job to provide that information.

LANGUAGE THAT WORKS

"We must not rush to judgment before all the facts are in. We need to ask more questions. We deserve more answers. And until we learn more, we should not commit America to any international document that handcuffs us either now or into the future."

You need to be even more active in recruiting experts who are sympathetic to your view, and much more active in making them part of your message. People are willing to trust scientists, engineers, and other leading research professionals, and less willing to trust politicians. If you wish to challenge the prevailing wisdom about global warming, it is more effective to have professionals making the case than politicians. When you do enter the fray, keep your message short, concise, and refer to the source of the material you use. Back up your points with a limited number of facts and figures – but then explain why they matter.

One final science note: Americans have little trust in arguments relying on short-term data, such as mentioning that year *X* was the hottest on record or year *Y* was the coldest on record, etc. Even 15 years of satellite records, or modeling that shows rising sea levels is not enough.

WORDS THAT WORK

"Scientists can extrapolate all kinds of things from today's data, but that doesn't tell us anything about tomorrow's world. You can't look back a million years and say that proves that we're heating the globe now hotter than it's ever been. After all, just 20 years ago scientists were worried about a new Ice Age."

The Kyoto camp is divided into two categories: ***America Besters*** and ***Calamity Janes***. The American Besters, led by Sen. John Kerry, will argue that we have the most innovative, technically advanced business community that can easily adapt to stricter anti-global warming regulations. The Calamity Janes, on the other hand, use scare tactics to convince audiences that global warming will lead to doom and gloom. Both have one common argument: The future will be a better place if we take the necessary actions today.

Let me warn you that both arguments do resonate with some people when they make the case that short-term pain will yield long term gain. Americans are still forward thinking and are likely to respond favorably to sacrifice if they can see a light at the end of the tunnel.

That's what you must offer. The fact that people take a long-term view gives you an opportunity to construct a "zero-regrets" argument. For example, you should argue that America should invest more in research and development to find ways to burn fuel more efficiently.

The traditional economic approach taken by Republicans to oppose many environmental rules and regulations simply does not move Democrats and has only limited appeal among independents. If you must raise economic concerns, the best way to reach swing voters is to take a practical, down-to-earth approach. Talk about the real world day-to-day effects that proposed environmental remedies would have on their everyday lives.

1. ***Put the costs of regulation in human terms.*** Stringent environmental regulations hit the most vulnerable among us – the elderly, the poor and those on fixed incomes – the hardest. Say it. Taxes on fuel and other products will be highly regressive, and new regulations will contribute to higher prices for necessities like food and utilities.

LANGUAGE THAT WORKS

"Unnecessary environmental regulations hurt moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas. They hurt senior citizens on fixed incomes. They take an enormous swipe at miners, loggers, truckers, farmers – anyone who has any work in energy intensive professions. They mean less income for families struggling to survive and educate their children."

This is most effective when you actually describe how specific activities and items will cost more, from "pumping gas to turning on the light." Remember, Americans already think they are an overtaxed people. Treaties such as Kyoto would have been yet another tax on an already overburdened population.

2. ***Job losses.*** Every year, excessive environmental regulations cost the United States thousands of jobs. Independents and swing voters can really relate to concrete effects such as this. The prospect of losing so many jobs may upset Americans more than any hypothetical effects of global warming, but you have to be careful to use specifics -- generalities will be rejected. Talk about the professions and industries that will be most hurt.

3. ***Major lifestyle changes.*** Talking generically about higher taxes and greater costs will not persuade those who are truly undecided of the dangers of the Kyoto protocol and similar regulation regimes. But they will listen if you point out that the unintended consequences of such well-intended regulations may make American life *less* safe, not more safe.

Let me emphasize that while the economic arguments may receive the most applause at the Chamber of Commerce meeting, it is the least effective approach among the people you most want to reach -- average Americans. The assertion that there are better ways to address environmental threats such as global warming is a superior argument.

Nothing scores better than a "We're Number One" theme, and in the arena of scientific breakthroughs, we really are Number One. Therefore, if supporters of drastic environmental regulations tell you that "we can do anything we set our sights on," and that ***"American corporations and industry can meet any challenge,"*** immediately agree, but then add the following:

WORDS THAT WORK

"Don't confuse my opposition to excessive regulation with a desire for inaction. We don't need an international treaty with rules and regulations that will handcuff the American economy or our ability to make our environment cleaner, safer and healthier.

"On the contrary, what we need to do is to put American creativity and American innovation to work. It's time to call on the leaders of science and technology to find new forms of fuel that burn cleaner and more efficiently. We need to invest in research and development that will restore polluted air and water to pristine conditions -- just as we have done for Lake Erie. We should take an active role in helping other nations save their forests and build safer energy sources."

That puts you back on offense, but don't stop there. Proponents will criticize America for causing a majority of the world's pollution and being the biggest contributor to the greenhouse effect. Excuse the pun, but this is garbage. We do so much more and pollute so much less than anyone else. ***You must set the record straight.***

WORDS THAT WORK

"As a nation, we should be proud. We produce a majority of the world's food, a large majority of the world's technology, and virtually all of the world's health and scientific breakthroughs, yet we produce a fraction of the world's pollution. America has the best scientists, the best engineers, the best researchers, and the best technicians in the world. That is why we must assume a leadership role in conservation and preservation, but we cannot do it alone. Every nation must do its part."

We should dominate the technology and innovation argument, but you will still fall short unless you emphasize the voluntary actions and environmental progress already underway. Remember, Democrats have nothing to offer but more bureaucrats and bureaucratic solutions to the challenges we face. They are simply attempting to involve bureaucrats in areas in which the private sector is already making tremendous progress.

MORE WORDS THAT WORK

"In the last 20 years, America has made significant progress in environmental research without any foreign treaty. These breakthroughs have already been put to work to help the global environment, and we didn't need any foreign body to tell us how it do it."

CONCLUSION: REDEFINING LABELS

The mainstream, centrist American now sees the excesses of so-called "environmentalists," and prefers the label "conservationist" instead. These individuals are still clearly "pro-environment," but not at the expense of everything else in life. They are the kind of voters who consider the environment as one of a variety of factors in their decision for whom to vote, but not the overriding factor. If we win these people over, we win the debate. It's that simple. The rest is commentary.

Most people now recognize that some self-described environmentalists are – in their words – "extremists." Thanks to some pretty bizarre behavior, there are some negative connotations that attach themselves to those who promote environmentalism. In particular, Greenpeace and Ralph Nader have an extremist image that turns off many voters.

We have spent the last seven years examining how best to communicate complicated ideas and controversial subjects. The terminology in the upcoming environmental debate needs refinement, starting with "global warming" and ending with "environmentalism." ***It's time for us to start talking about "climate change" instead of global warming and "conservation" instead of preservation.***

1. ***"Climate change" is less frightening than "global warming."*** As one focus group participant noted, climate change "sounds like you're going from Pittsburgh to Fort Lauderdale." While global warming has catastrophic connotations attached to it, climate change suggests a more controllable and less emotional challenge.

2. ***We should be "conservationists," not "preservationists" or "environmentalists."*** The term "conservationist" has far more positive connotations than either of the other two terms. It conveys a moderate, reasoned, common sense position between replenishing the earth's natural resources and the human need to make use of those resources.

   "Environmentalist" can have the connotation of extremism to many Americans, particularly those outside the Northeast. "Preservationist" suggests someone who believes nature should remain untouched – preserving exactly what we have. By comparison, Americans see a "conservationist" as someone who believes we should use our natural resources efficiently and replenish what we can when we can.

Republicans ***can*** redefine the environmental debate and make inroads on what conventional wisdom calls a traditionally Democratic constituency, because we offer better policy choices to the Washington-run bureaucracy. But we have to get the talk right to capture that segment of the public that is willing to give President Bush the benefit of the doubt on the environment – and they are out there waiting.

The words on these pages are tested – they work! But the ideas behind them – translated into actions – will speak louder than words. Once Republicans show the public that we are ***for*** something positive, not just against existing environmental regulations, we can start to close that credibility gap.

THE NINE PRINCIPLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND GLOBAL WARMING

1. Sound science must be our guide in choosing which problems to tackle and how to approach them.

2. We should identify the real risks to human health and safety ***before*** we decide how to address a problem.

3. Punishing real polluters must be a higher priority than creating more rules and regulations.

4. Local problems require local solutions. National standards may be necessary, but enforcement should be local. People in the community have the greatest incentive to keep their local environment clean.

5. Technology, innovation and discovery should play a major role in preserving a clean and healthy environment.

6. Environmental policies should take into account the economic impact on senior citizens, the poor and those with fixed incomes.

7. The best solutions to environmental challenges are common sense solutions.

8. All nations must share responsibility for the environment. No nation should be excluded from doing its part to improve climate conditions and the health and safety of its population.

9. All changes in national environmental policy should be fully discussed in an open forum. Laws, agreements and treaties should not be signed without public input.

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

(Democrats in their own words)

One of the most important responsibilities of government and elected officials is the protection of our air, our water, and our land. Making rules against polluting our natural environment and investments in restoring it are part of a Democratic tradition that extends back almost 100 years. From the founding of our national parks early in this century, to the landmark laws of the past three decades, one of America's greatest achievements has been conserving and cleaning our natural environment. This is one area where citizen initiative and government regulation of corporate behavior has been a demonstrable success.

Americans are proud of the achievements that have been made – and understand the urgency of the work that still needs to be done. Yet Republicans have opposed efforts to reform the massive government subsidies for new logging roads that will benefit private logging companies in national forests. They have blocked efforts to charge market prices for range-land grazing on federal land. And they even refused to re-authorize the "crown jewel" of American environmental laws – the Endangered Species Act.

When the law that restored the bald eagle to vibrant populations can't be preserved, we must call the Republicans what they are – anti-environment. Similarly, Republican support for corporate subsidies for polluters represents hypocrisy at its worst. It's bad enough that conservatives condone the exploitation of the environment. It's even worse when they want the taxpayers to pick up the tab.

Simply stated, we want to protect our natural resources for our children and future generations. The Republicans want to protect the deep pockets of those who seek to exploit our national parks and forests and waterways.

Democratic environmental legislation of past years made tremendous gains toward restoring our pristine natural resources. We no longer have rivers catching fire from pollution. Once dead rivers, lakes and estuaries are now pulsating with life. People are returning to these areas to swim, fish and enjoy the great outdoors as wildlife thrives. Republicans want to remove the stiff fines and penalties levied on polluters. We won't let them.

Today our skies are cleaner. In virtually every city in this country, the air is cleaner than it was 25 years ago. Smog is down. Carbon monoxide in the air is down. Parents can now breathe easier knowing their children are breathing cleaner air.

Yet today, there are those who want to turn back the clock on people who want to fish in the rivers and drink safe, clean water from the tap....on parents who want to be sure the park down the block is safe for their children to play in....on people who want to breathe clean, healthy air. We won't let them. Democrats will continue to fight Republicans and their corporate allies that would risk our children's long-term health, the air they breathe and the water they drink for the sake of short-term profits.

A CLEANER, SAFER, HEALTHIER FUTURE

(A Republican speech about the air we breath)

It is possible to achieve better protection of human health and the environment by regulating smarter, but you can't regulate smarter unless we all demand it from the regulators in Washington. The fact is, businesses – big and small – spend too much time trying to comply with too much paperwork and too many regulations from too many Washington bureaucrats.

If we are to move forward to a safer, cleaner, healthier future, we have to change the way Washington regulates. States and communities should be allowed – even encouraged – to take a greater role in environmental regulations and oversight. After all, who knows better about what each community needs, a local leader or a Washington bureaucrat? There are national environmental standards that must be set, and the federal government must make that determination, but federal resources must be targeted and allocated more effectively, and that's why we must have greater involvement by state and local officials.

But the improvements we need in Washington go beyond state and local involvement. ***We need to plan for the future, not just for today.*** Science and technology are constantly changing and improving. Too often, the federal government doesn't keep up with these improvements, and old regulations become out-dated and don't do the best job they can. That is why I want to see four immediate changes to the way we regulate the environment:

1. We must do a thorough review of the environmental regulations already in place, decide what works and what doesn't, and then make sure we don't add any more unnecessary or unproductive rules. There should be a mandatory requirement that obligates the federal government to determine whether current regulations should be reformed, consolidated or discontinued.

2. Washington should also be required to disclose the expected cost of current and all new environmental regulations. The public has a right to know what these laws and regulations cost.

3. In making regulatory decisions involving the environment, the federal government should use best estimates and realistic assumptions rather than worst-case scenarios advanced by environmental extremists.

4. New regulations should be based on the most advanced and credible scientific knowledge available.

Finally, to promote the ***accountability*** and ***responsibility*** of federal regulatory agency decisions, the entire process should be open to public scrutiny. It's time to restore common sense to environmental laws. This is how we move forward to a safer, cleaner, healthier future.

THE VALUE OF GREEN AND OPEN SPACES

(A Republican speech about protecting the earth)

William Shakespeare wrote, "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." I'm joining you today to share a little bit of my personal family history and why I think we all as Americans share a common interest in protecting our common legacy – the environment.

We would do well to take stock of what it is that has made this country great – and what has made us truly unique as Americans – so that we carry the finest traditions of America into the new century. Our rugged individualism, sense of adventure, and pioneer spirit are all embodied in our collective love of the outdoors. I want to join you today in a pledge to preserve and protect the special places God gave us.

Our public lands and waters, and all the private habitats and nature preserves, remind me of times spent with my family – as a child, discovering a love of the outdoors my parents and grandparents instilled in me; as a young adult, taking walks in the park with a special someone; and now as a parent, teaching my own kids to identify species of animals and plants, having a picnic, or just throwing or kicking a ball around in an open field. I want those places to still exist when my children grow older and teach their own kids the values of our family for another generation.

But if we fail to act now, many of those special places won't be preserved, and what is lost or destroyed cannot be replaced. We must take ***responsibility*** and show ***accountability*** for protecting these sacred places for generations to come.

More than half of us plan our annual vacations around some aspect of the outdoors. But in the new century, as we focus more than ever on the future and confront rapid change – we need to keep touch with those places that remind us of those defining ideas and principles that have made America the great pioneer nation.

Whether we want a place to get away for some solitude … or to vacation with our loved ones … or whether we just enjoy the peace of mind that comes with knowing that those places will still exist for future generations … we Americans see a value in conserving places vastly different than our own backyards. North Dakota does not look like North Carolina, nor does New Mexico look like New Jersey. America's diversity accounts for a great measure of her beauty.

Whether or not you believe as I do that ***conserving the environment is its own reward***, there is no doubt that green and open spaces will benefit all of us in the long run.

Man's discoveries from nature may provide the cure for diseases like cancer. Today, programs that take place in our national, state, and local parks and forests provide a place for children to learn new skills and values like teamwork and respect for nature, which helps prevent juvenile crime and delinquency. Having buffers of open spaces contributes to property values and the economic stability of neighborhoods.

Washington is rarely known for its display of common sense. But just this once, why not do what makes the most sense to most Americans and support policies for parks and open spaces that conserve nature and the environment as a legacy for the next generation of Americans? If we work together, there is no reason we can't make these areas cleaner, safer, and healthier for us all.