



EYE ON WASHINGTON

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GEORGE W. BUSH ADMINISTRATION: A Dismissal Record

A NO-SHOW ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Shortly after taking office, Bush administration officials announced they would not implement the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, under which countries agreed to legally binding targets for curbing heat-trapping "greenhouse" gases, mainly carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels. The move reversed a position Bush took during his presidential campaign.

In early November, negotiators for more than 160 countries, after four grinding years of work, reached agreement on a groundbreaking climate control treaty setting mandatory targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The United States, the world's biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, has exempted itself from the treaty.

In fact, the US Department of Energy reported that heat-trapping carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions increased by 3.1 percent in the United States last year — the biggest increase since the mid-1990s.

Why did President Bush retreat from his most significant and explicit campaign promise? In a letter to Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), the President quoted a flawed report that concluded that regulation of CO₂ would be too costly. The president also claimed that CO₂ is not considered a pollutant under the Clean Air Act. He is wrong on this point as well. Section 103(g) of the act includes emissions of CO₂ from power plants in a list of air pollutants that Congress directed EPA to include in pollution prevention programs.

ALL WET ON WETLANDS

In a stunning reversal of President Bush's Earth Day pledge to preserve wetlands, the Army Corps of Engineers recently proposed relaxing a series of year-old rules designed to protect streams and other wetlands.

The chief of the Corps regulatory branch has told agency officials they should help the nation recover from the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks by moving quickly on the thousands of wetland filling permits they handle each year.

Interior Secretary Gale A. Norton announced that she is closing the federal Office of Everglades Restoration, vowing to slash redundant bureaucratic overhead without diminishing the Bush administration's commitment to reviving the Florida Everglades. Rep. Mark Foley (R-Fla.) offers these comments on Norton's closure... "I'm all for streamlining, but this is like streamlining the court system by getting rid of the judge."

ENERGY - BIG OIL RULES

The Bush-Cheney energy plan, which the administration released in May, is the culmination of a process that hinged on cozy business connections, secret deals and industry campaign contributions. The energy plan promotes industry-favored measures, including opening protected lands to oil and gas drilling, building more than 1,300 electric power plants, and weakening environmental standards.

Last Summer, the General Accounting Office was spoiling for an unprecedented legal and constitutional clash with

Vice President Cheney. Cheney had refused to turn over records from his energy task force, and the GAO, the 80-year-old investigative arm of Congress, was preparing to sue a federal entity for the first time. Comptroller General David M. Walker described the fight as a direct threat to the GAO's reason for being, a separation-of-powers issue that would determine whether the legislative branch could exercise the oversight role envisioned by the founding fathers. But Walker put the lawsuit on hold after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The Bush administration said it opposes a Senate plan to drastically cut U.S. electric power plant air emissions because the proposal is too costly and could harm national security.

The Bush administration has no plans to pursue higher fuel efficiency standards for vehicles, Vice President Cheney told General Motors executives in Michigan.

Vice President Cheney stated that the best way to reduce greenhouse gases is to build more nuclear power plants. In a Reuters article, Cheney argued that there hadn't been a permit for a US nuclear plant since 1975. The 26-year hiatus in new permit applications can be explained in large part by the disaster at the Three Mile Island plant near Harrisburg Pennsylvania 22 years ago this month. In addition, the U.S. has not yet found a way to provide safe long-term storage for the growing accumulation of toxic nuclear waste now stored at existing nuclear plants all over the nation.

A proposed rollback of an energy-saving standard for air conditioners has produced a sharp split within the Bush administration. The EPA is accusing the Energy Department of "misinformation" - understating potential energy savings while exaggerating the impact on industry.

ENDANGERING ENDANGERED SPECIES

In his budget, President Bush called for a provision to relax requirements for endangered or threatened species listings under the Endangered Species Act. The budget includes no funding to implement court orders brought by citizen suits under the Act, severely restricting the ability of citizens and environmental organizations to effectively sue the government.

The FWS updated Endangered Species Act candidate species list contains some extraordinarily bad news for our nation's most imperiled species: four more species are believed to be extinct and the moratorium on new listings will be extended for at least another year.

Public comments indicate overwhelming opposition to a Bush administration plan to scrap grizzly bear reintroductions along the Montana-Idaho border, a FWS report shows. A spokesman for Interior Secretary Norton, who put the reintroduction plan on hold, said public opinion will not be the determining factor in the plan's future.

The Bush administration abandoned a plan for major flow changes in the Missouri River, despite public acknowledgment by the Army Corps of Engineers that its current management of the river violates the Endangered Species Act.

PUBLIC LANDS - PRIVATE INTEREST

The Bush administration reversed an 11th-hour Clinton administration ruling on mining policy, making it easier for companies to mine for gold, copper, zinc and lead on public lands. It also issued a legal opinion that could clear the way for a Nevada company to dig an open-pit gold mine in a part of the California desert considered sacred by a local Indian tribe.

To the delight of mining interests, US

The Sierran's Quarterly Report On Major Issues Before The U.S. Congress and Federal Agencies

Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth has asked Interior Secretary Norton to lift a two-year moratorium on new mining activities covering 1.15 million acres of federal land in southern Oregon, including a 700,000-acre area under consideration for National Monument status.

Secretary of Interior Norton announced that the administration likely will try to adjust the boundaries of the 19 new National Monuments designated by President Clinton, and consider allowing commercial activities on these lands.

POLLUTION

President Bush unveiled a budget that would slash overall spending for environmental and natural resources agencies by \$2.3 billion, or 7.2 percent, in fiscal year 2002 — a drop from \$32.3 billion.

The Bush administration suspended the "contractor responsibility rule," which prohibits government agencies from awarding contracts to companies that violate procurement and other federal laws — including laws that protect the environment, public health, consumers, and working families.

EPA chief Christie Whitman named a loyal deputy from her days as New Jersey Governor to head the federal Environmental Protection Agency's regional office in New York. Jane Kenny, a senior New Jersey government executive, will be the new Regional Administrator of EPA's Region 2.

In an apparent reversal of one of President Bush's campaign promises, a top EPA official has proposed ending the long-standing practice of holding the federal government to the same environmental standards as private industry. In an internal memorandum, EPA Administrator Whitman's top enforcement advisor calls the policy "high-handed, arrogant, and wrong" and suggests it's not legally valid. These comments clash with Bush's earlier statements in which he denounced federal facilities as the nation's worst polluters and pledged to hold them accountable. "It's time to end the double standard that has the federal government acting as enforcer of the nation's environmental laws, while at the same time causing pollution that violates those laws," Bush vowed during a campaign appearance before the November 2000 election.

The EPA is putting off a decision on the status of Clean Air Act rules requiring reduced emissions from power plants that are upgraded or expanded.

CONGRESSIONAL VOTES: SENATE

7/12/2001: Protection of Endangered Species - An amendment to the Interior Department funding bill that would have suspended Endangered Species Act protections for three endangered fisheries in the Klamath Basin of Oregon and California. The amendment, offered by Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR) was tabled by the Senate by a vote of 52 to 48. Corzine & Torricelli voted YES, the environmental vote.

7/11/01: Protection for our National Monuments - An amendment to the Interior Department funding bill was approved that would protect our National Monuments from destructive oil drilling and mining activities. The amendment, offered by Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL), passed the Senate by a voice vote after an attempt to table the amendment failed by a vote of 42 to 57. Corzine & Torricelli voted NO, against tabling the bill, the environmental vote.

4/5/01: Increased Funding for Environmental Programs - NJ Senator Corzine sponsored an amendment to the budget resolution that would have provided \$50 billion to restore cuts and increase funding for various environmen-

tal programs including the Land and Water Conservation Fund, energy efficiency and the clean up of toxic sites. Unfortunately, the Corzine amendment failed 46-54. Corzine & Torricelli voted YES, the environmental vote.

Read more: <http://www.senate.gov/~corzine/press/2001/04/2001405815.html>

4/2/01: Campaign Finance Reform - The vote on final passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2001 (better known as the McCain-Feingold bill) - S.B. 27 - passed in the Senate by a vote of 59 to 41. Corzine & Torricelli voted YES, the environmental vote.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

10/04/2001: Increased Funding For Farm Conservation Programs - An amendment to the Farm Bill that would have increased financial incentives to farmers to protect wetlands, clean water and open space. The amendment, offered by Representatives Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY), Ron Kind (D-WI), Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD), and John Dingell (D-MI), was defeated by a vote of 200-226. The entire NJ delegation, Andrews, Ferguson, Frelinghuysen, Holt, LoBiondo, Menendez, Pallone, Pascrell, Payne, Rothman, Roukema, Saxton, Smith voted YES, the environmental vote.

8/01/01: Protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from Oil Drilling - An amendment to the Energy Act of 2001 (H.R. 4) that would have eliminated a provision that seeks to open the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. The US House of Representatives rejected, by a vote of 223-206, an amendment offered by Representatives Ed Markey (D-MA) and Nancy Johnson (R-CT) to strike the provision and protect the Refuge from drilling. The entire NJ delegation, Andrews, Ferguson, Frelinghuysen, Holt, LoBiondo, Menendez, Pallone, Pascrell, Payne, Rothman, Roukema, Saxton, Smith voted YES, the environmental vote.

8/1/01: Increasing Fuel Economy Standards - An amendment to the Energy Act of 2001 (H.R. 4) that would have increased fuel economy standards by closing the light truck loophole that allows SUVs and other light trucks to meet a lower fuel economy (CAFE) standard than cars currently meet. The amendment offered by Representatives Boehlert (R-NY) and Markey (D-MA) failed by a vote of 160 to 269. The entire NJ delegation, Andrews, Ferguson, Frelinghuysen, Holt, LoBiondo, Menendez, Pallone, Pascrell, Payne, Rothman, Roukema, Saxton, Smith voted YES, the environmental vote.

7/27/01: Prohibiting EPA from delaying or weakening the standard for arsenic in drinking water - A vote to prohibit the EPA from expending funds to delay or weaken the standard for arsenic in drinking water. The amendment to the VA-HUD-Independent Agencies appropriations bill (H.R. 2620), offered by Reps. David Bonior (D-MI) and Henry Waxman (D-CA), passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 218-189. The entire NJ delegation, Andrews, Ferguson, Frelinghuysen, Holt, LoBiondo, Menendez, Pallone, Pascrell, Payne, Rothman, Saxton, and Smith voted YES, the environmental vote... EXCEPT Roukema, who voted NO.

7/27/01: Restoring \$25 million to the EPA's enforcement budget - A vote to restore \$25 million to the EPA's budget for enforcement and compliance assurance staff. The amendment to the VA-HUD-Independent Agencies appropriations bill (H.R. 2620), offered by NJ Reps. Robert Menendez and Frank Pallone, failed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 182-214. All NJ Democrats, Andrews, Holt, Menendez, Pallone, Pascrell, Payne, and Rothman voted YES, the environmental vote. All NJ Republicans, Ferguson, Frelinghuysen, LoBiondo, Saxton, and Smith voted NO, or did not vote (Roukema).

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