

REVIEWING CANDIDATES and the ENVIRONMENT in 2008

By Stewart Clifton

Given the current focus on such hot button issues as climate change, dependence on foreign oil, environmental stewardship, economic growth and nuclear energy, the need for objective criteria with which to analyze candidates' stances on environmental issues is imperative this election year. There are a seemingly endless number of information sources available from which to gather candidate information. This article mentions a few that provide non-partisan information about candidates and issues.

They include:

Project Vote Smart www.votesmart.org PVS is a non-profit, non-partisan research organization that collects and distributes information on candidates for public office in the United States. It covers candidates and elected officials in six basic areas: background information, issue positions (via the Political Courage Test), voting records, campaign finances, interest group ratings, and speeches and public statements.

On The Issues www.ontheissues.org is a non-partisan and non-profit organization providing information to voters about candidates on their web site. This organization was started in 1996, and is currently run primarily by volunteers. The mission of this organization is to help voters pick candidates "based on issues rather than on personalities and popularity." Their slogan is: "Every political leader on every issue." They obtain their information from newspapers, speeches, press releases, and the Internet. This site seems a little random in that it features candidates regardless of the likelihood of their being elected, but it does have quotes and issue - specific material not readily available elsewhere. A more specific link to environmental and energy issues on this website is http://www.ontheissues.org/Energy_+_Oil.htm

League of Conservation Voters - www.lcv.org LCV's mission is to advocate for sound environmental policies and to elect pro-environmental candidates who will adopt and implement such policies. Each year LCV publishes its national environmental scorecard and presidential report card to inform the public about the most important environmental legislation of the past Congressional session and show them how their own and other representatives voted. It works to elect leaders who stand up for a clean, healthy future for America and to educate the public, build coalitions, promote grassroots power, and train the next generation of grassroots environmental leaders. So LCV, while not related to any particular party, is definitely an advocacy organization and makes endorsements for President and in many Senate and House races. They also publish the long-running "dirty dozen" list of Congressional "bad guys" on environmental issues.

Tennessee Conservation Voters www.tnconservationvoters.org TCV is a coalition of 20 state conservation and environmental groups and individuals dedicated to raising voter awareness, advocating for stronger laws and holding elected leaders accountable for safeguarding the environment of Tennessee. TCV is loosely affiliated with LCV, although TCV only works on state issues. The affiliated Tennessee Conservation Action PAC makes selected endorsement in state legislative and gubernatorial races. TCV employs professional lobbyists to work alongside volunteers at the state level to initiate and promote better environmental laws and to help amend or defeat bills with negative environmental impacts. TCV tracks environmental sponsorship and voting records of state legislators to help voters become aware. The info is published yearly in the TCV Legislative ScoreCard.

To end on a slightly different note, readers might wish to peruse www.opensecrets.com to review individual and PAC donors to national and state campaigns.

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