

Presidential Candidates 2008 and The Environment

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Introduction

Aside from the occasional mention of global warming, the environment is getting the usual short shrift from candidates battling in the primaries for their parties' nominations. And although illegal immigration is on the table, there continues to be zero discussion of overall immigration rates and their demographic and environmental consequences.

"Thanks for nothing," we must once again say to our politicians, the mainline media, and the timid and trembling mainline environmental organizations and scientific societies.

This brief essay is just one person's attempt to upset the calm. In October 2006 we analyzed the environmental voting records of all 535 members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. The full report is available at <http://www.sci.sdsu.edu/salton/CEV2006.pdf>, and its summary is given at the end of this one.

In brief, that 2006 report calculated for each congressman an overall environmental score (OE score). This was calculated as a weighted average of the scores assigned by the League of Conservation Voters (LCV score) and those assigned by Americans for Better Immigration (ABI score). The first gives congressmembers credit for reducing per capita impacts on the environment, and the second gives them credit for slowing, or not increasing, the rate of population growth. In the U.S. at present, population growth is due primarily to immigration from other countries. The rationale for this approach is detailed in the 2006 report.

The Data

Here I present in **Table 1** a greatly reduced data set that allows comparison of presidential candidates with each other and with those "fantastic fifteen" members of Congress who obtained the highest OE scores in our 2006 report. Current LCV and ABI scores are assumed to be very similar to those for 2006. Comparisons are obviously limited by the fact

that ABI, LCV and OE scores are not available for the three candidates who are not members of Congress. For all six candidates still in the race, however, we do at least have a current ABI assessment of their positions on two key immigration issues, as given in the two right hand columns of Table 1. These evaluations are based primarily on their campaign promises, not solely on their past voting behavior. Very detailed accounts of the candidates' and congressmembers' positions on different immigration issues are available at <http://www.betterimmigration.com/candidates/2006/prez2008.html>.

Some Findings

Presidential candidates who are congressmembers have OE scores on the low side. Those who have survived in the races until now have lower OE scores than those who have withdrawn. Moral: Have a poor environmental record if you want to be president of the U.S. Just prior to the 2004 elections, G.W. Bush had a lower OE score than any California congressman, Republican or Democrat (see: <http://www.sci.sdsu.edu/salton/CEVR2004.html>).

Three of the front runners – Clinton, Obama, and McCain – are all rated by ABI as having "abysmal" positions on both legal and illegal immigration from an environmental perspective. Of these three, only Clinton has a decent LCV score. All three were big supporters of SB2611 which the Senate, but not the House, passed in May 2006. That bill would have granted amnesty or a pathway to legalization to almost all illegal aliens in the U.S., thereby encouraging even greater illegal immigration in the future.

SB2611 would also have tripled the rate of legal immigration, raised the rate of U.S. population growth from about 0.9% per year to about 1.9% per year, and pushed us to over 500 million people by 2050 (see: http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer?pagenam e=research_apr06nl01) rather than the 420 million currently predicted. During their

campaigns none of these three candidates has retreated from their earlier, clear position of being in favor of massive increases in immigration.

Candidates Paul, Huckabee, and Romney oppose amnesty and propose, basically, “attrition through enforcement”, where, by cracking down on employers of illegal aliens, denying benefits intended only for citizens and legal residents, and, perhaps, eliminating “birthright citizenship”, illegal aliens will be given strong incentive to leave. However, like Clinton, Obama and McCain, they also favor large increases in legal immigration and “temporary” guestworker programs. Whether they favor

increases as large as those specified in SB2611 is unclear.

Huckabee and Romney’s positions on issues concerning reduction of per capita impacts on the environment are not evaluated in the databases relied on here. Since they served as state governors, however, such evaluations undoubtedly were carried out by environmental groups in their states. Paul’s LCV score is low, but his OE score is very much better than those of Clinton, Obama and McCain.

Conclusion

We’re up a creek without an oar, between the devil and the deep blue sea, choosing between the frying pan and the fire as usual.

Environmental Voting Records of Members of the U.S. Congress, 2006

<http://www.sci.sdsu.edu/salton/CEV2006.pdf>

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SUMMARY

Voting records of U.S. congress members were evaluated for favorability to the environment. Overall environmental scores were calculated on the basis of two criteria: support for legislation aimed at reducing U.S. per capita environmental impacts (data from League of Conservation Voters website) and support for legislation favoring lower U.S. population growth rates (data from Americans for Better Immigration website). Most congress members of both parties have poor to mediocre overall environmental voting records, with scores in the 30-60 point range on a 100-point scale. Democrats tend to be stronger on reducing per capita environmental impacts, Republicans stronger on reducing the population growth rate. The only legislators with environmental scores greater than 80 were Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Jim

Saxton (R-NJ), Robert Byrd (D-WV), Michael Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Christopher Shays (R-CT), Ben Chandler (D-KY), and Brian Bilbray (R-CA). Among those at the “Bottom of the Barrel” (scores < 34) were presidential hopefuls such as Chuck Hagel (R-NE), Sam Brownback (R-KS), Bill Frist (R-TN), and John McCain (R-AZ), and other notables such as John Conyers (D- MI), Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Charles Rangel (D-NY), Bob Filner (D-CA), Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX), John Warner (R-VA), Pete Domenici (R-NM), Maxine Waters (D-CA) and Richard Lugar (R-IN). Assessments of environmental voting records that ignore whether legislators are voting to increase or decrease the rate of U.S. population growth can be very misleading as to which legislators will have the most positive impact on environmental quality over the long term.

Table 1. Environmental Voting Records of Presidential Candidates as Compared with 15 Top-Ranked U.S. Congressmembers. Conservation (LCV), Population (ABI) and Overall Environmental (OE) scores are given. w = withdrawn.

Member	District	ABI Score ^a	LCV Score ^b	OE Score ^c	ABI Evaluation ^d of positions on immigration	
					Illegal	Legal
Fantastic Fifteen						
DeFazio, Peter (D-OR)	OR-4	85	91	87		
Saxton, Jim (R-NJ)	NJ-3	92	76	87		
Byrd, Robert (D-WV)	WV	94	69	86		
Fitzpatrick, Michael (R-PA)	PA-8	89	77	85		
Shays, Christopher (R-CT)	CT-4	83	86	84		
Chandler, Ben (D-KY)	KY-6	77	94	83		
Bilbray, Brian (R-CA) ^e	CA-50	97	49	81		
Smith, Lamar (R-TX)	TX-21	96	49	80		
Ramstad, Jim (R-MN)	MN-3	87	67	80		
Taylor, Gene (D-MS)	MS-4	94	51	80		
Bradley, Jeb (R-NH)	NH-1	90	53	78		
McIntyre, Mike (D-NC)	NC-7	81	68	77		
Case, Ed (D-HI)	HI-2	65	94	75		
Marshall, Jim (D-GA)	GA-3	84	55	74		
Barrow, John (D-GA)	GA-12	79	64	74		
Presidential Candidates (congressmembers)						
Hunter, Duncan (R-CA) w	CA-52	97	7	67		
Tancredo, Tom (R-CO) w	CO-6	97	6	67		
Paul, Ron (R-TX)	TX-14	79	24	61	good	poor
Biden, Joseph (D-DE) w	DE	27	94	49		
Dodd, Christopher (D-CT) w	CT	24	92	47		
Kucinich, Dennis (D-OH) w	OH-10	19	95	44		
Clinton, Hillary (D-NY)	NY	18	88	41	abysmal	abysmal
Obama, Barack (D-IL)	IL	26	57	36	abysmal	abysmal
McCain, John (R-AZ)	AZ	24	47	32	abysmal	abysmal
Presidential Candidates (non-congressmembers)						
Huckabee, Mike	AR				excellent	fair
Romney, Mitt	MA				excellent	poor
Edwards, John w	NC					

a Americans for Better Immigration Report Card Score (October 2006).

b Average League of Conservation Voters Score for 108th and 109th sessions of Congress

c Average of Population Score and Conservation Score, weighted 2:1

d These evaluations were taken directly from the ABI website on 2 Feb 2008. They assign a low rating to candidates who would give amnesty or a pathway to legalization to almost all illegal aliens in the U.S. ("Illegal" rating) or who would greatly increase legal immigration rates ("Legal" rating). Full details on candidates positions are given at <http://www.betterimmigration.com/candidates/2006/prez2008.html>.

e As Bilbray participated only briefly in the 109th session, his LVC score was calculated as the average of his LCV scores for that session and for the 106th session (the last time he was in office), weighted 1:2.