

Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend a few moments this evening discussing elements that deal with our quality of life in our environment. After a seemingly interminable and preliminary process which has been seemingly going on since the last elections 2 years ago, we are now entering into the political home stretch.

As the candidates move past the debate on debate and the skirmishing that occurs here on Capitol Hill about budgets and health care, there is an overarching theme that is yet to be comprehensively addressed, the livability of our communities and the role the Federal Government can play in making our families safe, healthy, and economically secure.

The long-term implications for the environment have raised many areas of concern for citizens across the country. I find that it is interesting that it is not just a concern for college towns or for traditional urban centers. We find that these are very significant issues in areas like the mountain States of Colorado and Arizona and Utah. People have been facing development and fear the situation is going to deteriorate overtime. I would like to take this opportunity this evening to discuss some of those items in greater detail.

I would like to focus for a few moments about the environment and what difference it is going to make in the election this fall. We are now facing the issue of what candidate and which political party will do the best job. It is very clear that the Republican ticket, even though not currently in office on the national level, does in fact have an environmental record. Former Representative Cheney, when he was in the House for almost 13 years, compiled a lifetime voting record on environmental issues of 13 percent, one of the worst in that period of time. Likewise, Governor Bush in his two terms now as governor of Texas has an environmental record. Where is his leadership dealing with the fact that Texas puts more chemicals in the air than any other State and by most rankings is the State with the worst toxin level in the atmosphere? Were Texas a country, it would be the world's seventh largest national emitter of carbon dioxide.

The largest problem is the dangerous amount of nitrogen oxide which mixes with the exhaust vehicles to create ozone and smog. And under the leadership of Governor Bush, in 1999 Houston surpassed Los Angeles as the country's smoggiest city. Texas had the Nation's 25 highest ozone measurements and 90 percent of the Nation's readings deemed very unhealthy by the EPA.

This summer, while Los Angeles has posted eight more days of unhealthy ozone than its Texas rival, Houston's worst smog was dirtier than any in Southern California according to air quality officials. Since Bush took office, the number of days when Texas cities have exceeded Federal ozone standards have doubled. Houston and Dallas currently face Federal deadlines to make sharp cuts in air pollution or risk losing Federal transportation money.

At the same time that Texas environmental conditions are reaching a crisis point, cities such as Charlotte, North Carolina and Salt Lake City have managed to absorb growth while improving their air quality. The Bush administration claims that growth, not governance is the reason for the State's appalling air quality. It is hogwash. Rather the State's environmental record perhaps best underscores what a Bush Presidency would mean for our Nation's air, water, streams and for forested area. Virtually no support for growth management, no commitment to improving the air or water quality, no protection for environmental resources.

Consider the impact of the Republican governor in terms of who he has appointed to run the State's environmental agencies. All of the Texas natural resources conservation commissioners have backgrounds in industry. The same industrialists who are the generous contributor to the Bush Presidential campaign. He is fond of saying you cannot regulate or sue your way to clean air, clean water. Yet, consider the results of his environmental centerpiece, rather than forcing the worst polluting industrial plants in the State, those grandfathered into the State's clean air policy, that currently contribute 36 percent of the chemicals Texas released in the atmosphere, Bush has worked out a program with the industrialists, a voluntary cleanup.

After 2 1/2 years, the scheme has produced only 30 of 461 plants not already facing Federal restrictions to comply with environmental guidelines. Together these 30 plants reduce grandfathered emissions by only 3 percent. Should Vice President Al Gore and the American public push Bush on these issues, George W. may feel like the disobedient son haunted by his father's words. I recall in 1988 George Bush, Sr. went to Boston Harbor and attacked the environmental record of his opponent Michael Dukakis, saying my opponent has said he will do for America what he has done for Massachusetts, that is what I fear for my country. That has an ominous ring as it relates to George Bush's leadership in Texas.

Mr. Speaker, I think the item that frustrates me the most is not the governor of Texas' poor environmental record, lack of leadership; but it is the lack of perception and passion about protecting the environment that I personally find most disturbing. It seems to a casual observer at least that he seems unaware of Texas' serious environmental problems. Where is his outrage and his concern being expressed that under his leadership Houston has become the

city with the Nation's worst air quality?

This environmental indifference, if combined with the typical Republican leadership that we have seen in Congress in the last 6 years, could be disastrous. I want to talk about that in a moment, but first I guess it is important to also reference that there is another branch of government that is going to be in flux as a result of the outcome of this election, because every 2 or 3 years on average a Supreme Court Justice is appointed. There have been no justices appointed the last 6 years. It is very likely that the next President will be appointing more than one justice, probably 2, 3, 4, in the next 4-year term alone.

Governor Bush has indicated that from his perspective, Justice Scalia and Justice Thomas would be the models for his Supreme Court appointments. I think a cursory review, even a cursory review of their judicial decisions indicates why that could potentially be a disaster for the environment. But the Supreme Court is only the tip of the iceberg, because the next President will be appointing hundreds of Federal district and circuit court judges. Now, these are the men and women who make decisions every day in the various circuits that impact the day-to-day activities of Americans. In many cases, these are the decisions that stand, that are never reviewed, that determine the outcomes. Of course, the judiciary on the district and circuit court level has been sort of the farm club, the bench for future higher appointments. It would be, I think, unfortunate if we were to have an approach such as has been indicated by Governor Bush as his model.

I also mentioned the other branch of government, the legislative branch, because here too there are significant differences that are offered to the American public. It has been the Democratic administration that time and time again has beaten back destructive environmental riders, vetoed legislation that was overreaching, and has been a part of constructive negotiations to be able to protect and enhance the environment and hold the line here in Congress. If you look at the ratings by the people whose job it is to advocate for us on the environment, one of the best is the League of Conservation Voters. They have for years been compiling a nonpartisan assessment of legislative voting records. They break these records out looking at the House and the Senate and the Republicans and the Democrats.

The difference between the two parties is stark. If we look at just the leadership of the environmental committees alone, in the Senate the party average for the Republicans is 13; for the Democrats it is 76 percent, but for the average leadership the chairman of the Senate Republicans are actually even worse, scoring a bare 9 percent. If we look at the House of Representatives, it is even more stark. The average for Republicans is 16 percent; for the Democrats the average is 78. But if you look at the leadership of the committees that deal

with the environment, the average for the chairs of the Republican members is 1 percent. Of the 5, there was one, according to the League of Conservation Voters, 1 was 6 percent, the others had 0. Yet, for the democratic Ranking Members, the people who stand to ascend to the chairmanships, the average is 69 percent. If we look at the House and Senate leadership, overall, the average leadership in the Senate was 0 for the Senate leaders, and in the House, it was 4 percent. The democratic leadership was 86 percent in the House, even more environmentally sensitive than the party average of 78 percent, but basically, more than 6 times more environmentally sensitive and friendly, according to the evaluation of the League of Conservation Voters.

Mr. Speaker, this has manifestations as it deals with actual policy impact. I listened with some frustration earlier this evening as one of my colleagues, the gentleman from Florida, attempted to take to task the Democrats in the administration dealing with energy policy. I thought for a moment, my goodness. What is the energy policy that has been given to us by the Republicans?

For example, the Bush-Cheney ticket would be drilling in the ANWAR, in the Arctic Reserve, destroying forever this pristine, what has been described as the Serengeti of the Arctic, and there are a few month's supply of energy. This is something that the American public opposes by a 3-to-1 margin which the Republicans in Congress have been advocating, but a democratic administration has been resisting. I look at the difference that has been proposed by my friends in Congress from the Republican side of the aisle, because it has not been very long ago that they had no energy alternatives; that, in fact, the Republican administrations in the 1980s cut back energy research and development by billions of dollars for alternative energy sources.

In 1995, when the Republicans took control of both the House and the Senate, they once again started the attack that was begun by the Reagan administration. Their first efforts were to cut energy efficiency programs 26 percent; \$1.117 billion in fiscal year 1995 was cut to \$840 million. The Committee on the Budget report for fiscal year 1997 actually recommended abolishing the Department of Energy. Think of that: abolishing the Federal agency to work in this area, and further proposed cutting energy conservation programs 62 percent over 5 years.

In these total 5 years, the Republicans have slashed funding for solar, renewables, and conservation funding by a total of over one and a third billion dollars below the Clinton administration requests.

Furthermore, the Republicans have cut programs like the Weather Assistance Program beginning in 1995 when they cut it by 50 percent. Even now, in the middle of the energy

emergency that we have been looking at over the course of the last 6 months, the Republicans are, in fact, asleep at the switch. Last spring, in the middle of the gas price crisis, number one, the Republicans were ready to, or they were flirting with having the President's authority to protect our economy by using the Strategic Petroleum Reserve expire. In 1999, the Republicans rejected an Energy Department proposal to buy \$100 million of crude oil, or nearly 10 million barrels of crude at that time of record-low prices to build up the Strategic Petroleum Reserve that could have been used during a situation such as we are facing here.

It took the House Republicans nearly a year to recognize that rising fuel prices were a national problem. They last looked at oil prices in March of 1999 and then held only the second hearing in March of 2000. There was nothing for a year from the people who control Congress. Now, despite overwhelming evidence throughout 1999 and early 2000 that prices of gas, diesel and home heating oil were on the rise, House Republicans failed to hold even a single hearing or make a single proposal on stabilizing fuel prices, and throughout this period, they took no steps to invest in America's energy independence and economic security. But, in 1999, and I recall this well, the Republican leaders called again for the elimination of the Department of Energy and selling off the petroleum reserve.

Specifically, in April and May of last year, after OPEC's production cuts started a rise in prices, Republican leaders, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Arme y), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DeLay), and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. Blunt) joined the Republican budget chair and 34 other Republicans to introduce H.R. 1649, the Department of Energy Abolition Act. I think the collected memory of my friends on the Republican side when they attempt to criticize the Democrats in Congress, who are not in control, or the efforts of the democratic administration to do something about it is shortsighted, to say the very least.

The Arme y-DeLay energy bill would have eliminated the Energy Department and with it, oil conservation programs, renewable energy conservation research; it took energy policy out of the cabinet and sold off the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and the Navy's petroleum reserve. Such foresight. How much better off would we be today if we had adopted their reckless proposal?

Another ironic example for me of the Republicans dropping the ball is when the chairman of the Subcommittee on Energy and the Environment of the House Committee on Science held hearings in 1996 that attacked the Department of Energy's information administration for 'Consistently overestimating the price of oil and using these 'inflated predictions' to justify increases in conservation research and development programs.' The subcommittee chairman criticized the Department of Energy officials for predicting an oil crisis that could be caused by

increased demand, increased imports, or instability in the Persian Gulf. The projections that drew that Republican chairman's criticism predicted that in the year 2000, the price per barrel of imported oil could be as high as \$34, and to that Republican subcommittee chair, that was outrageous. I note for the record that as of March 7 in the year 2000, the price was \$34.13.

Mr. Speaker, every day in America communities large and small are struggling with issues that define their environment, their liveability, their quality of life. Some people suggest that there is no difference between the Republicans and the Democrats, but I will tell my colleagues when it comes to the environment, the reality is stark. The Democrats in this administration and in Congress have a positive record of support and accomplishment, of sympathy and passion. The Republican ticket offers indifferent voting records, cursory performance in office, and advocacy of dangerous, even reckless, environmental policies. Our air, our water, the landscape, our precious natural resources do not have the time to survive benign neglect or malicious indifference, let alone active assault. There is a huge difference between the parties, perhaps on the environment more than any other issue. The stakes of the election for the environment could not be higher. I hope that the American public will look closely at the records and promote policies and candidates that will make our communities more livable and our families safer, healthier, and more economically secure.