

EARTH TALK

From the Editors of E/The Environmental Magazine

Dear EarthTalk: Where do the leading presidential candidates stand on the issue of climate change and other environmental issues?

-- Max S., Seattle, WA

The outcome of the 2008 presidential election could very well have a big impact on a wide range of environmental issues, especially climate change.

All of the Democratic candidates—Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, John Edwards, Bill Richardson and Dennis Kucinich—support reducing carbon dioxide emissions nationally upwards of 80 percent by 2050 in order to stave off global warming.

Likewise, each would like to see fuel efficiency standards for cars and light trucks raised to at least 40 miles per gallon within the next few decades.

Meanwhile, only one of the major Republican contenders, John McCain, has even articulated a position on the issue of global warming, with most favoring expanding our base of greenhouse gas-spewing coal-fired power plants.

As for specific track records, Clinton has an impressive record of introducing pro-environment legislation into Congress, and for her time in the Senate scores a 90 (out of 100) on green voting from the nonprofit, non-partisan League of Conservation Voters (LCV).

Obama is newer to the politics of the environment, but scored a 96 for his two years in the Senate from LCV, and has garnered kudos from environmental leaders for the aggressive climate and energy plan he unveiled in October 2007.

Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich wants to launch a Works Green Administration similar to the Works Progress Administration of the Great Depression, only this time to benefit the environment through the development of alternative energy technologies and infrastructures.

Bill Richardson, who served as Sec-

retary of Energy under Bill Clinton and more recently as governor of New Mexico, wants to be the “energy president,” and has an 82 lifetime rating from LCV to back it up. He has proposed the most ambitious carbon reduction plan of any of the candidates (90 percent by 2050).

John Edwards was the first candidate to make his campaign carbon neutral in March 2007, and greens consider him perhaps the most progressive of all the Democrats on the climate issue.

On the Republican side, the environmental bright spots are few and far between. McCain is really the only choice with any declared concern for the environment. In 2003 he co-sponsored the first Senate bill aimed at mandatory economy-wide reductions.

While the bill didn't garner enough votes to pass, it set the stage for future iterations that could put the U.S. on par with European nations as leaders in the fight to cut carbon emissions. McCain is also the only Republican candidate specifically opposed to drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Mike Huckabee scores some points with greens for his willingness to consider a specific increase in automotive fuel efficiency standards and for his (limited) embrace of alternative energy.

Mitt Romney is willing to consider a cap on emissions, but only if enacted on a global basis (including China and India, that is). The remaining Republicans (Rudy Giuliani, Fred Thompson and Ron Paul) have best been non-committal on climate change and environmental issues in general.

CONTACT: For more detailed information on specific candidates' positions and track records on environmental issues, check out the League of Conservation Voters' Voter Guide, www.lcv.org/voterguide.

GOT AN ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTION? Send it to: EarthTalk, c/o E/The Environmental Magazine, P.O. Box 5098, Westport, CT 06881; submit it at: www.emagazine.com/earthtalk/thisweek/, or e-mail: earthtalk@emagazine.com. Read past columns at: www.emagazine.com/earthtalk/archives.php.



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All of the 2008 Democratic presidential candidates support reducing CO2 emissions upwards of 80 percent by 2050. Republican contenders have barely articulated positions on the issue of global warming, with most favoring expanding our base of coal-fired power plants. Pictured here: (top left to right) Democratic candidates Barack Obama, John Edwards and Hillary Clinton; (bottom left to right) Republican contenders Mike Huckabee and Mitt Romney. (Photo courtesy of Flickr)

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