

THE REPUBLICAN REVERSAL

Research Documents

Primary Sources

2000 Republican Party Platform

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American Partners in Conservation and Preservation: Stewardship of Our Natural Resources

"As an avid outdoorsman, I know all our prosperity as a nation will mean little if we leave future generations a world of polluted air, toxic waste, and vanished wilderness and forests."

— George W. Bush

Today's Republican party stands in the proud tradition of Teddy Roosevelt, the first president to stress the importance of environmental conservation. We approach both the national and individual stewardship of natural resources in the spirit of his maxim: "The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value." Over the past three decades, we have made progress. Air and water are cleaner. Some endangered species have made comebacks. Wetlands are being preserved. Recycling is commonplace in our homes. That progress itself has brought us to the threshold of a new era in environmental policy. The lessons we have learned over the last three decades, along with the steady advance of environmental technology, gives us the opportunity to explore better ways to achieve even higher goals.

Our way is to trust the innate good sense and decency of the American people. We will make them partners with government, rather than adversaries of it. The way current laws have been implemented has often fostered costly litigation and discouraged personal innovation in environmental conservation. We need to get back on a common track, so that both the people and their government can jointly focus on the real problems at hand. As a basis for that cooperation, we propose these principles:

- Economic prosperity and environmental protection must advance together. Prosperity gives our society the wherewithal to advance environmental protection, and a thriving natural environment enhances the quality of life that makes prosperity worthwhile.
- Scare tactics and scapegoating of legitimate economic interests undermine support for environmental causes and, what is worse, can discredit actual threats to health and safety.
- Environmental regulations should be based upon the best science, peer-reviewed, and available for public consideration.
- We support the federal, local, state, and tribal responsibilities for environmental protection. We believe the government's main role should be to provide market-based incentives to innovate and develop the new technologies for Americans to meet — and exceed — environmental standards.

- We condemn the current administration's policy of resorting to confrontation first. Instead we should work cooperatively to ensure that our environmental policy meets the particular needs of geographic regions and localities.
- Environmental policy should focus on achieving results — cleaner air, water, and lands — not crafting bureaucratic processes. Where environmental standards are violated, the government should take consistent enforcement.

While the very nature of environmental concerns at times requires federal intervention, the heartening progress made by many of the states and localities demonstrates their unique ability to solve problems at the local level. As the laboratories of innovation, they should be given flexibility, authority, and finality by the federal government. Many states have enacted environmental education and voluntary self-audit laws to encourage people to find and correct pollution; the Congress should remove disincentives for states to achieve these goals. Strong leadership by governors, legislators, and local officials is the key to solving the emerging environmental issues of this new century. For example, the reauthorization of the Safe Drinking Water Act by the Republican Congress enabled states and communities to take stronger action to ensure reliable and safe water supplies. Another example is the way states are handling the problem of brownfields. In 35 states, voluntary programs are cleaning up thousands of brownfield sites faster and more effectively, and with less litigation, than under the federal Superfund program. A case in point is Texas, where, under Governor Bush, the number of brownfield sites restored to productive use climbed from zero to 451, not only improving the environment but restoring more than \$200 million in property value to local tax rolls, most of it in poor communities.

We will replicate Governor Bush's success on the national level. We will use Superfund resources to actually clean up places where people live and labor, rather than waste it on costly litigation. The old approach of mandate, regulate, and litigate has sent potential developers away from brownfield neighborhoods. The result: no new businesses, no new jobs — only dirty and dangerous sites. Governor Bush has pledged to transform this failure into an environmental win for those communities, just as he did in Texas, and we heartily endorse his agenda for doing so. Wherever it is environmentally responsible to do so, we will promote market-based programs that are voluntary, flexible, comprehensive, and cost-effective. The Endangered Species Act (ESA), for example, is sometimes counter-productive toward its truly important goal of protecting rare species, 75 percent of which are located on private land. Its punitive approach actually encourages landowners to remove habitat to avoid federal intervention. This serves as a disincentive for private landowners to do more to restore habitat and become private stewards of wildlife. The legislation needs incentive-based cooperation among federal, state, local, and tribal governments, and private citizens. The result will be a more effective ESA that better protects wildlife diversity.

As environmental issues become increasingly international, progress will increasingly depend on strong and credible presidential leadership. Complex and contentious issues like global warming call for a far more realistic approach than that of the Kyoto Conference. Its deliberations were

not based on the best science; its proposed agreements would be ineffective and unfair inasmuch as they do not apply to the developing world; and the current administration is still trying to implement it, without authority of law. More research is needed to understand both the cause and the impact of global warming. That is why the Kyoto treaty was repudiated in a lopsided, bipartisan Senate vote. A Republican president will work with businesses and with other nations to reduce harmful emissions through new technologies without compromising America's sovereignty or competitiveness — and without forcing Americans to walk to work.

Protecting Property Rights

We link the security of private property to our environmental agenda for the best of reasons: Environmental stewardship has best advanced where property is privately held. After all, people who live on the land, work the land, and own the land also love the land and protect it. As Governor Bush has said, "For the American farmer, every day is Earth Day." Conversely, the world's worst cases of environmental degradation have occurred in places where most property is under government control. For reasons both constitutional and environmental, therefore, we will safeguard private property rights by enforcing the Takings Clause of the Fifth Amendment and by providing just compensation whenever private property is needed to achieve a compelling public purpose.

Public Lands for the Public Good

Collaborative conservation represents the future for the 657 million acres of America we call the "Public Lands." Working from the grass roots up, local groups are finding solutions for the problems of the public lands in their areas. Republicans want to encourage that approach, for it holds the greatest promise of sound environmental stewardship and productive use of the nation's natural resources. We will change the operating culture of the federal agencies that manage public lands, giving a greater role to states and to their political subdivisions in order to foster a creative partnership with the American people. As a sign of that partnership, we applaud Governor Bush's intention to make all federal facilities comply with the environmental laws by which the American people live.

If there had been any doubt that major reform is needed in the management of public lands, it was burnt away in the catastrophic wildfires of recent months. This avoidable devastation was the price innocent people and helpless communities paid for the extreme policies — and environmental arrogance — of the current administration. Greater tragedies await the people of our Western States if those policies are not changed. Republicans will employ the best techniques of forestry science to implement a national management strategy for public lands that minimizes the risk to local communities while preserving our natural heritage.

Our national parks are the crown jewels of the country's environmental heritage. They belong to all Americans and should be accessible to all. Congressional Republicans have taken the lead in reversing years of neglect and abuse of these treasures, and we will continue that proactive agenda to keep the park system healthy and accessible to all. We should make it a priority to

alleviate the maintenance and operations backlog at our national parks. Rather than adding to this magnificent legacy by unilateral executive branch action, such as the administration's recent National Monument designations, we will seek to actively involve Congress, as well as affected states and local communities, in land acquisition decisions.

We support multiple use of public lands conducted in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner. We are committed to preserving high priority wilderness and wetlands. The Everglades are a crucial example of a special federal responsibility. We call for a review of lands owned by the national government — half the total territory of our Western States — to develop a comprehensive plan to better manage existing holdings. In some cases, that may mean transferring or sharing responsibility for managing those lands with state or local governments, while all levels of government should recognize existing rights to water, minerals, and grazing. We reaffirm the traditional state primacy over water allocations and will continue the availability of renewable rangeland under conditions that ensure both expanded production of livestock and protection of the range environment. We also reaffirm our commitment to preserve access to public lands for multiple use.

We recognize the vital role the timber industry plays in our economy, particularly in homebuilding, and we support its efforts to improve the health of the country's forests. Because so many people in rural America rely on public forests for their livelihood, a Republican administration will promote sustainable forest management, using the best science in place of the no-growth policies that have devastated communities in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska.

American Agriculture and Rural America in the Global Economy

Agriculture is at the heart of the U.S. economy. The food and fiber sector accounts for 13 percent of the nation's economic output and employs, directly or indirectly, more than 22 million people. When agriculture is hurting, the entire country aches. In all our policies and programs, the Republican party is guided by two principles. First, to farmers and ranchers, nothing beats production and sales at a good price. As long as they have truly fair and open domestic and foreign markets, they can do for themselves far better than anything government can do for them. Second, they want to produce what makes sense on their own private property, not what official Washington thinks should be grown there. Under Republican leadership, government will never again run our family farms.

While these are not the best of times for farmers and ranchers, the hopeful promise of our Freedom to Farm Act, which finally replaced decades of controls by a federal bureaucracy, has been limited by events at home and abroad. Farmers were promised that, along with the end of governmental protection for commodities markets, there would be reforms in tax, trade, and regulatory policy. Opposition from the current administration minimized progress in all three areas. As a result, American farmers were hard pressed to deal with the challenge of increased global production and slack demand in Asia. The ineptitude of current U.S. trade policy only made it worse.

For American agriculture, prosperity depends in large measure on expansion of global markets. Our farmers already export some \$54 billion in products and commodities every year. For them, for the aspirations of their families and the dreams of their children, the opening of foreign markets is essential. Governor Bush understands that. That's why he has asked for restoration of presidential fast-track negotiating authority, the key to forceful trade negotiations abroad. And it's why he's determined to open the China market for America's farmers and ranchers. It's why he's called for the U.S. to demand, in the next round of global trade talks, the complete elimination of agricultural export subsidies and tariffs. It's why he will fight the European Community's outrageous restrictions against imports of U.S. crops and livestock. And it's why he has pledged to exempt food exports from any new trade sanctions.

Results will take time, and so, looking toward the Farm Bill of the year 2002, we call for immediate action on a safety net that will give farmers the means to manage cyclical downturns. This year's reform of the Federal Crop Insurance Act by the Republican Congress was a good start. In its wake, we propose: Emergency assistance to facilitate the transition to a market-driven regime.

A farm income savings plan: tax-deferred accounts to soften fluctuations in farm earnings.

- Total repeal of the death tax.
- Immediate 100 percent deductibility for health insurance costs.
- A one-time exemption from capital gains tax on the sale of farms.
- Regulatory relief.

We reaffirm our strong support for agricultural research, including biotech and biomass research, and for a permanent research and development tax credit. We likewise support the ethanol tax credit, which is good for both the environment and for farmers. Our program of regulatory reform has special relevance to farming, which bears an annual regulatory burden of \$20 billion. Every farm family has better uses for that money. Apart from costs, there are grave questions about the impact of the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act. Its implementation must not disrupt farmers' access to safe crop protection products. We reaffirm our support for cooperative partnerships between federal, state, and local governments and private landowners for the conservation of our soil, water and biological resources on private land. The federal government should work with the states to adopt water quality standards that rely on the best science and implementation of best management practices, including addressing hypoxia and runoff issues. We call for the elimination of outdated laws that hamper the adaptation of agriculture to the demands and opportunities of a new century. Futures trading should be deregulated. Regional restrictions on dairy products that drive up consumer prices and penalize productive farmers should be ended. We commend the livestock industry for its efforts to ensure accurate and open price reporting to ensure a competitive market.

There is much more to rural America than agriculture, ranching, and forestry. The kind of economic development that generates family-sustaining jobs is critical to small towns and rural

communities. We recognize the special challenges they face in working for good schools, accessible health care, decent housing, safe drinking water and waste disposal, and serviceable transportation. The federal government should be an active partner with state and local entities in that process, especially in advancing the availability of the Internet and modern telecommunications technology in rural America.

Energy

What happened? Eight years ago, the nation was energy confident. Our standing in the Middle East was at its zenith. The oil cartel was in retreat; gasoline was affordable, even as automotive progress reduced emissions from cars. Today, gas prices have skyrocketed, and oil imports are at all-time highs. Foreign oil now accounts for one-third of our total trade deficit. Meanwhile, domestic oil production has fallen 17 percent over the last eight years, as vast areas of the continental U.S. have been put off limits to energy leasing — though we depend on oil and natural gas for 65 percent of our energy supply. Additional oil reserves and deposits of low-sulfur coal may be out of reach because of unilateral designation of new national monuments. By any reasonable standard, the Department of Energy has utterly failed in its mission to safeguard America's energy security. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has been no better, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been shutting off America's energy pipeline with a regulatory blitz that has only just begun. In fact, 36 oil refineries have closed in just the last eight years, while not a single new refinery has been built in this country in the last quarter-century. EPA's patchwork of regulations has driven fuel prices higher in some areas than in others and has made energy supplies no longer fungible. What meets EPA's standards in one city may not be legally sold in another. The result has been localized shortages and sharp price spikes, as suppliers scramble to get acceptable fuels to the markets where they are needed. Environmental concerns are not at the heart of the matter. In fact, the current administration has turned its back on the two sources that produce virtually all of the nation's emission-free power: nuclear and hydro, the sources for 30 percent of the country's electricity. Because of cumbersome federal relicensing of hydro and nuclear operations, we face the prospect of increasing emissions and dirtier air. Meanwhile, nuclear plants are choking on waste because the current administration breached its contract to remove it — and then vetoed bipartisan legislation to store it at a safe, permanent repository for which the taxpayers have already paid \$7 billion. At the same time, power-producing dams are being torn down, by federal edict, in energy-short areas, and the Pacific Northwest is their next target. Breaching dams would not only raise electric rates but would deny western farmers irreplaceable water for irrigation and a cost-effective means of moving their crops to West Coast ports. We should develop and use technologies that will help entrance salmon runs while keeping the dams in place. It's a man-made nightmare, but at last the public is waking up and demanding change. What is at stake, after all, is not just the price we pay to heat and cool our homes. What is at stake is the nation's New Economy, which relies heavily on electricity for its infrastructure and on petroleum for its trade. Affordable energy, the result of Republican policies in the 1980s, helped create the

New Economy. If we do not carefully plan for our energy needs, the entire economy could be significantly weakened. The Republican Congress has moved to deregulate the electricity industry and empower consumers through a competitive market — but congressional Democrats are holding up the process, and the administration has provided no leadership. America needs a national energy strategy — and a Republican president will work with congressional Republicans to enact their National Energy Security Act. That strategy will:

- Increase domestic supplies of coal, oil, and natural gas. Our country does have ample energy resources waiting to be developed, and there is simply no substitute for an increase in their domestic production.
- Improve federal oil and gas lease permit processing and management, including coalbed methane.
- Provide tax incentives for production.
- Promote environmentally responsible exploration and development of oil and gas reserves on federally-owned land, including the Coastal Plain of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
- Offer a degree of price certainty to keep small domestic stripper producers in operation.
- Advance clean coal technology.
- Expand the tax credit for renewable energy sources to include wind and open-loop biomass facilities, and electricity produced from steel cogeneration.
- Maintain the ethanol tax credit.
- Provide a tax incentive for residential use of solar power.

This agenda will reduce America's dependence on foreign oil, help consumers by lowering energy prices, and result in lower carbon emissions than would result from the current administration's policies. To protect consumers against seasonal price spikes, that legislation also authorizes a home heating oil reserve for the Northeastern States and allows expensing of costs for its storage. It will also make low-income housing more energy-efficient. All in all, it is a dramatic reversal of the nation's present course, and that's just what America needs: a balanced portfolio of energy options that is stable, secure, and affordable, with minimal impact on the environment.

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