

Centrists.Org Energy and Environment Policy Project Framework

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Centrist Perspective on Energy and the Environment

What exactly should the centrist perspective be on energy and the environment? The typical responses to this question we at Centrists.Org receive in answer to our queries often encompass either blank stares or somewhat defeatist comments; “good luck finding an agreement” is a common one. Yet, in actuality, the centrist perspective on these issues tends to be more prevalent than one might suppose.

Unfortunately, however, it is often expressed under less than desirable circumstances, such as a court-of-law, as sides with diametrically opposing positions seek resolution to issues that are often tied to inherent mandates of legislation encompassed by the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Superfund, or other energy and environmental laws.

When middle ground is ordered by a court-of-law, the consequences are rarely desirable, in that positions, whether held by the right or the left, are always weakened, or, alternatively, become more entrenched and opposed to future reconciliation. In the end, however, even after years of confrontation, the opposing parties usually end up losing some or all of the key provisions they sought to uphold, with the result that energy and environment policy starts shifting to the right or left depending on the current political climate.

Centrists.Org believes that moving too far right or too far left on most of our energy and environment issues can negatively impact both the environment and the economic well being of our nation. In our view, therefore, energy and environmental policy should therefore seek balance between environmental protection and economic needs. We believe that a healthy and functional environment cannot only co-exist with sustainable development through responsible energy and economic policy, but it should be regarded as an equal partner within the context of such policies. Implied, is that new energy and environmental policies should encourage opposing parties to work together and identify solutions. Centrists.Org thus firmly believes that energy and environmental policies should provide incentives to avoid long drawn-out battles and aim towards fair, responsible, and cooperative solutions.

A centrist's energy and environment policy position, then, is more easily shaped once the sides are drawn and a clear dichotomy can be identified with respect to values, philosophy and understanding of the facts. When opposing sides have defined their agendas and they become entrenched in the details of why their ideals should be adopted, the facts are often clouded by inaccuracies, and it becomes difficult to see the forest from the trees when key facts are either overlooked or over-emphasized. New policy is needed to move national interests forward that protect both environmental and economic interests by embracing the facts as they relate to science, technology, engineering, economics, and demographics.

Not surprisingly, therefore, it is opposing positions that create an opportunity for Centrists.Org to determine where middle ground exists with respect to the difficult and controversial issues that surround energy and environment. While centrist positions target big picture policy considerations, objective analysis of the details is needed to identify the centrist energy and environment position. Five elements, science, technology, engineering, economics, and demographics, are the cornerstones of fair and responsible energy and environmental policy. These elements should drive policy-making and provide the foundation for our laws and regulations. Centrists.Org relies on these five elements to support its policy recommendations on energy and the environment.

Finally, Centrists.Org is of the opinion that policies for energy and the environment often have to be dynamic and inclusive of geographically unique situations. Sound science and identification of best technologies applicable to local or regional ecoregions should be applied so that unique physical, chemical or biological characteristics can be taken into account by decision-makers. While allowing limited flexibility in policy may invite more complex administration and difficulty in enforcement, it is perhaps the fairest strategy for integrating local needs while promoting pragmatic economic and environmental solutions.

Framing Centrists.Org Boundaries

As discussed above, Centrists.Org can more easily promote its viewpoints once the left and right positions are established. However, to more clearly identify the Centrists.Org perspective on energy and environmental policy, we can begin to see where centrist viewpoints fall by posing several questions.

- 1) Does the policy or position promote a fair and reasonable solution?
- 2) Does the policy or position encourage an equitable spread of responsibility to all parties and individuals?
- 3) Does the policy or position require cooperation and interaction between the affected parties and individuals?
- 4) Have the scientific, technological, engineering, economic, and demographic considerations been fairly and honestly integrated into the policy or position?

If the answer is yes to these four questions, we have likely come close to a centrist's position on energy and the environment.

Fringe entities and individuals are often eager to answer yes to these questions to move agendas forward even though such an answer may be misleading. Inevitably, emotions are tied to environmental issues for many reasons, including spiritual connections people may feel towards our wildlands, private property rights issues, or the opinions of those who believe our natural resources and biodiversity should be exploited to better our country or personal gain.

Our country is plagued with contradictions regarding the best ways to manage and conserve energy and the environment. On the one hand, Americans want a clean, healthy, and viable environment with access to quality recreation, biodiversity, and protection of open space. On the other hand, Americans also want cheap energy to heat and cool their homes, drive automobiles, and sustain their current way of life.

Technology is currently unable to address all of the factors required to realize this outcome. However, it's not out of the question that someday in the not too distant future we can have a clean and protected environment with ample energy at our disposal. To realize this dream, our nation must strive to make it come true. Holding back both technological advancement and energy conservation ideals will hinder progress towards this dream. There is no need to reverse progress and go back to the Stone Age in order to protect our environment. Global issues related to world population, climate change and world reliance on fossil fuels are best solved through good policy tied to technological advances that support environmental protection, conservation, and sustainable development.

A centrist's position on energy and the environment targets both environmental protection and sustainable development through green economics. Green economics are market-based solutions that encourage citizens to put their money where their values are by purchasing and using products that are environmentally sound and/or conserve natural resources. In cases where profit or emotional bonds are too difficult to overcome by the right or left, however, green economics alone may not solve energy and environment issues, and government policy is needed to protect the will of the majority who want balance. This requires compromise and cooperation after the facts are brought forward to find the middle ground on energy and environmental policy.

Centrist.Org positions on energy and the environment do not always agree with the positions of fringe groups because specific provisions they feel are important, may fall short of expectations or they may

disagree with the facts. How does Centrists.Org address concerns brought up by environmental zealots or profit moguls? The answer is a careful and honest approach tempered with a high degree of respect.

Truth and wisdom are often present in extreme positions, but perhaps the whole story is not revealed. The devil is in the details and facts must be scrutinized through an objective process in order to find middle ground. True facts must be highlighted, falsehoods exposed, philosophical ideals and personality conflicts put aside, and there needs to be a clear recognition of what we don't know. In cases where we don't know or understand a system or set of regional / natural conditions, there are options to conduct research to answer key questions and solve technological problems. In cases where the possible outcome is simply too devastating to the environment or the well being of national economics, we must err on the side of caution until more is known.

Does this mean no stone can be left unturned before we move forward on energy and environmental policies? Absolutely not. Analysis paralysis has and continues to be a hindrance to responsible environmental protection and sustainable development, and encourages wasteful spending. However, we should have a reasonably high level of confidence that we are heading in the right direction if new policy is being considered.

Such blending of viewpoints from the various sides creates the most potentially radical of all positions in the eye of extremists...a centrist position on energy and the environment. The saving grace here is that the majority of conservationists, government resource managers, and corporate interests will be satisfied if there is balance. Moreover, a centrist position adopted in the beginning of pending battles can avoid years of frustration, missed environmental protection, economic hardship, and wasteful spending. The intent of Centrists.Org is to streamline energy and environment policy development by recognizing and promoting pragmatic solutions right away. Centrists.Org encourages early action in order to avoid unfortunate policy decisions based on years of frustration.

Are there cases where a black or white decision is the only choice for energy and environment policies? Absolutely. As stated earlier, in some cases we may not know or understand the limiting factors affecting energy and the environment. Also in some cases, it may be very clear, or strongly suspected what will happen if policy stagnates or moves forward. In these cases, Centrists.Org believes that it is prudent to not "throw the baby out with the bath water" or, alternatively, "cry wolf." On occasion, Centrists.Org may support a right or left position because available facts support a specific outcome. For example, if Centrists.Org examines proposed policy related to toxic waste cleanup and the available data supports a significant increased potential human cancer rate if new cleanup levels are adopted, Centrists.Org may side with the environmental interests until more information is available. Similarly, Centrists.Org may encourage right of left positions if the proposed policy results in extreme economic or environmental hardship, the loss of a national treasure, or there is a clear lack of knowledge resulting in the inability to honestly predict a positive or negative outcome, etc.

In order to determine one direction over the other, facts and rationale supporting Centrists.Org positions are presented as well as opportunities for adaptive management. Furthermore, if key information is

needed, and there is time or a critical need to collect the information to make an informed decision, Centrists.Org will outline appropriate recommendations to compile the information / data concerning national energy and environmental policy.

The Plan

Centrists.Org will develop original energy and environmental policy position and ideas focused on sustainable development, innovative bipartisan decision making, and stewardship. The purpose of articles, papers, and public forums led by Centrists.Org and other partner contributors is to embrace fairness, cooperation, and citizen / corporate responsibility.

Primary goals for the energy and environmental policy area are:

- **Energy:** Detailed policy analysis and objective research aimed at protecting, preserving, enhancing, and utilizing natural resources while sustaining reasonable economic interests.
- **Environment:** Detailed policy analysis and objective research aimed at protecting, preserving, and enhancing the environment and human health.

Energy and environmental policy covers a large number of topics. To this end, Centrists.Org will focus on four primary areas for energy and environmental policy.

- 1) Development in the West
- 2) Climate Change
- 3) Water
- 4) Natural resource extraction/conservation

A wide array of special projects, applied research, and policy assessment is possible in these four areas. Centrists.Org will move in the appropriate directions as emerging and hot topics in energy and the environment come forward.

Also, energy and environmental issues overlap in these four focus areas and in some cases national policy work involves all four focus areas. For example, new Endangered Species Act policy is linked to all four focus areas. Similarly, a significant change in our climate will affect the other three focus areas.

Review of the Focus Areas

Development in the west is an issue that affects all citizens. The once open and free west has been predominately subdued and forever changed. Increasingly, the open range and mountain scenery are being developed. Open space and biodiversity will continue to decline if development continues unchecked. As a result, the west is becoming more like the east and the developed areas of the western

coastal states. Clearly, jobs and economic opportunity are created through development, but sometimes at the expense of the environment. Grazing issues on public lands, ecosystem conservation, high quality recreation, food production, endangered species conservation, and biogeography are sample topics for this focus area. Centrists.Org opened a Sheridan, Montana office specifically to work on issues of development in the west, including water and natural resource extraction policies.

Climate change will impact all four Centrist.org focal energy and environmental policy areas. There is no longer any question that the earth's climate is changing, although debate still lingers with respect to causal factors, and particularly the role of human industrial and agricultural activities. This debate, though healthy from a scientific perspective, has also been exploited by interests seeking to confuse government, the public and the business sector. The unfortunate result is that key corporate, state and national decision makers have been led to believe that climate change science is imperfect and cannot be used as the basis for developing response policies that are economically and environmentally sound. Centrists.Org takes the position that the accumulating scientific evidence points to two, key related conclusions: one is the empirical reality of climate change and the other is the negative effects that this change will potentially have on the ecosystems that sustain the earth's human populations. Indeed, evidence of climate change now encompasses most of the earth's biomes from the deep oceans to its alpine environments, and significant ecological changes in the Arctic and Antarctic especially already offer an ominous glimpse of the speed with which effects can negatively alter ecosystems. Centrists.Org believes that at least some of the predicted effects of climate change are already evident in our nation, and that these effects will become evident to everyone within the next 10-20 years as they increase in scope and magnitude and begin impacting our lives more directly. Centrists.Org will work on policy recommendations that seek to mitigate climate change impacts related to energy and pending climate change policy. Centrists.Org will also consider reduction in carbon dioxide emissions through alternative energy policy and technological advances in nuclear power generation and renewable energy for this focus area.

Water is the lifeblood of our county. It was thought at one time that state boundaries may be best represented by watershed boundaries vs. arbitrary political lines. Water has and will continue to be of increasing national interest in terms of its connection to economics, supplies, and aquatic beneficial use. Drought throughout areas of the U.S. has resulted in environmental and economic disasters. Competing interests for water have left aquatic species literally high and dry and forced some agricultural producers to go out of business. Water supply demands continue to grow in our western cities stressing water resource reserves in aquifers and reservoirs and increasing competition for other uses. While primarily a western issue, water quantity is a national concern because it relates to impacts on biodiversity and regional climate change. Along with water quantity, quality of water in our drinking water systems, rivers, lakes, and aquifers is and always will be a concern. Centrists.Org will be working on policy for both water quality and quantity and will look closely at federal and state government programs responsible for its protection.

Natural resource extraction covers a wide range of activities from coal, oil, coal bed methane, metals, timber and other extraction practices and natural resources uses. Extraction of natural resources often

occurs in areas that are valued for their recreation and health of associated ecosystems, which creates controversy. In addition, local and regional job markets can be positively or negatively affected by natural resource extraction policies in response to factors such as global demand, or local job creation to develop a resource. Our lifestyles, in part, dictate where national natural resource extraction policy will move. Americans want cheap energy and our national energy demand continues to grow. Americans also want good paying jobs, box store prices for non-durable goods, and a healthy environment. Increased energy consumption and expanded natural resource extraction activities aimed at satisfying these needs create a dilemma because ecosystems may be stressed from increased natural resource extraction. Elements of world trade, alternative energy, application of best management practices and sustainable practices, and nuclear power generation must be considered as possible ways to mitigate natural resource extraction impacts. Corporate and commercial interests are most often targeted as the best way protect the environment and conserve natural resources; however, changing our lifestyles is also equally as important in order to conserve and protect natural resources. To this end, the public needs to be better informed on how and why individuals must be part of the solution to create a sustainable future, conserve energy, and protect our environment. Through a cooperative approach our nation can balance economic and environmental needs associated with natural resource extraction policy. Also key for this focus area is investment in new technologies that mitigate environmental impacts and help us lower national reliance on fossil fuels.

Contributors

Centrists.Org is working with several contributors on its energy and environment policy area.

Scott Payne is the director of the energy and environment policy area and leading fund raising efforts to support research projects. Scott has a diverse background in energy and environment working on many applied projects involving all four focus areas. Scott is the author of *Strategies for Accelerating Cleanup at Toxic Waste Sites* and he is currently finishing his Ph.D. at the University of Montana. He has been an environmental consultant for nearly 20 years and owner of KirK Environmental, LLC. He is an expert on water and environmental assessment and restoration. Scott also manages the Sheridan, Montana Centrists.Org research office.

Dr. Bill Fraser is an ecologist that will focus his efforts on climate change issues. His experience and expertise stem from nearly 30 years of research in the western Antarctic Peninsula, a region that in the last 5 decades has experienced the largest and most rapid temperature increase on Earth. Bill's long-term research and findings provide a template for understanding both the ramifications of climate warming on the world's ecosystems and the mechanistic processes by which ecological change occurs. Summaries of his work can be found in U.S. News and World Report (February 28, 2000 issue), National Geographic and in recent testimony before the U.S. Senate. Bill is currently president of Polar Oceans Research Group a 501(3)(c) organization funded primarily by the National Science Foundation. Polar Oceans Research Group is also part of a consortium of institutions (members include the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, College of William and Mary; University of California Santa Barbara; Scripps Institution of

Oceanography, University of California San Diego; and Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, Columbia University) that together form the Palmer Long-Term Ecological Research Program. This program focuses on research that addresses interactions between Antarctic climate change and marine ecosystem response.

Centrists.Org is also working **Dr. Bill Woessner** at the University of Montana Center for Riverine Science and Stream Re-Naturalization (CRSSR), an interdisciplinary research group advancing our knowledge of natural stream function and developing methods and procedures to mitigate impacted stream systems. The CRSSR consists of 31 research scientists and state-of-the-art research facilities at the University of Montana.

The CRSSR hopes to be a critical research arm for Centrists.Org projects with enough resources to work on the most challenging environmental issues facing the US.

Washington, DC Centrists.Org Staff

Staff in the Washington DC Centrists.Org office include Executive Director Ed Lorenzen. He provides organizational oversight and liaison services for the energy and environmental policy area between Centrists.Org and Washington DC policy makers, interest groups, and corporate interests. Kelly Buck is a staff biologist and also the fiscal manager for the Centrists.Org energy and environment policy area.

Centrists.Org will continue to develop its grassroots approach for partnering with outside entities interested on working on Centrists.Org energy and environmental policy areas. Several individuals and national entities have expressed interest in collaborating with Centrists.Org on projects. Pursuing these relationships is considered a cornerstone of a highly effective energy and environment policy area. As new affiliations are made they will be announced and added to this energy and environment policy area framework.

Outreach, education, and practical application of principles are needed to promote centrist positions to the public and policy decision-makers on Capitol Hill. Centrists.Org will organize forums to bring right and left positions forward as a way to educate the public, identify middle ground, and help policy makers form an opinion. In addition, Centrists.Org will write articles and papers that promote fair, responsible, and cooperative energy and environment policy. Through education and objective analysis of the facts, decision-makers and citizens can consider centrist positions for energy and environment policy. The Centrists.Org applied research arm located in Sheridan, Montana targets real world projects needed to demonstrate centrist energy and environmental applications.

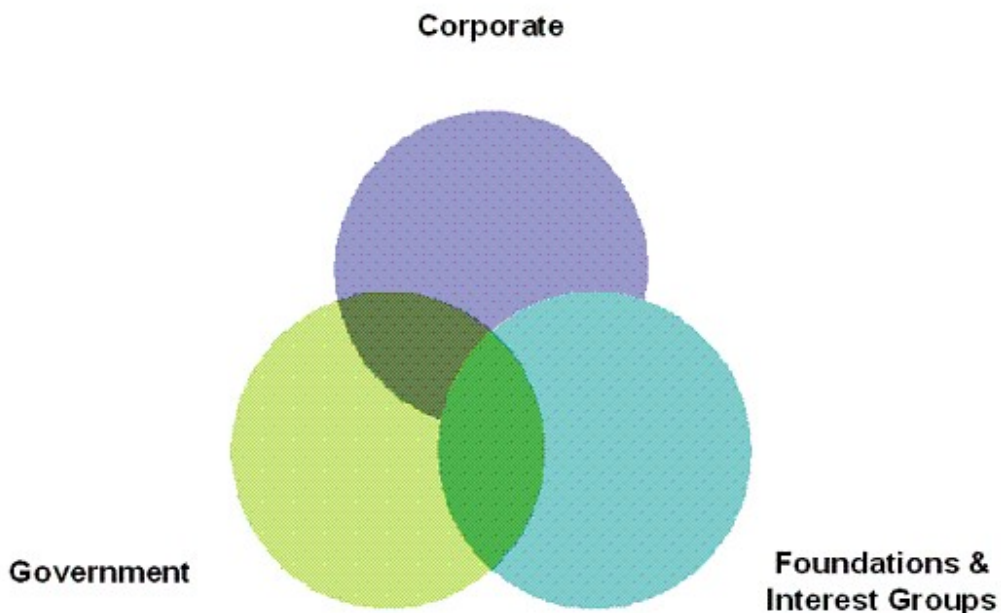
Policy work will focus on research and investigation of current energy and environmental topics. In addition, Centrists.Org will prepare timely whitepapers and technical opinions embracing fair and pragmatic market-based solutions. Another focus is long-term environmental protection that encourages joint government and corporate oversight.

Funding

Funding for this Centrists.Org policy area will be from three primary sources. Most funding will be derived from private foundations. While competition for these dollars is high, centrist ideals and focus areas are anticipated to be strong contenders for these dollars. Other funding will be retained from government entities offering applied research grants as well as private corporations interested in funding special research projects. Funding will be used to support round table discussions and public forums for outlining environmental and energy issues as well as new ideas for moving pragmatic ideals forward.

Partners

Centrists.Org believes that collaboration and broad participation are prerequisites for finding common ground on tough issues and ending political stalemates. Centrists.Org seeks partners to work hand in hand on its projects. Particularly important is finding partners with potentially differing positions that are willing to work openly and in an integrated fashion towards the common goal of finding practical and fair solutions to energy and environment issues. Partners from corporations, government, foundations, and environmental interest groups will be solicited to participate on Centrists.Org projects.



The Future

Centrists.Org will be a highly visible, effective, and reliable energy and environmental think tank. We envision 50 corporate roundtable members, 10 foundation partners, 10 special interest entities, and multiple legislative and agency contacts participating in the energy and environmental policy area. The Centrists.Org energy and environmental policy area will be recognized nationwide by 2007 and the 10-person staff / partner contributors will be regarded as objective researchers providing policy analysis and ideas to solve the most challenging energy and environmental issues.

Centrists.Org is a non-partisan, non-profit, organization formed under section 501(c)(3) of the tax code, and dedicated to public education on vital public policy matters. Contributions to Centrists.Org are tax deductible.

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