

US Representative - John Olver
The Olver Report

YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Important environmental legislation is pending in both houses of Congress. Most of these bills are stuck in committee because of controversial anti-environmental features that will ultimately do more harm than good. Superfund, the Endangered Species Act, and the Clean Water Act are just a few examples of legislation in need of updating. And there is very little being done to strengthen other environmental laws currently on the books. I do not consider maintaining the status quo to be a pro-environment agenda.

Fighting the "Do Nothing" Congress

Though the Republicans did not have the votes to kill the Environmental Protection Agency's new air pollution regulations, we are still struggling to achieve a coherent clean air policy. We need to reduce emissions to relieve the discomfort of asthmatic children and the elderly. However, international standards to reduce greenhouse gases set at the Kyoto Convention are still in limbo; the response in Congress has been so hostile towards these standards that the Clinton Administration has decided against introducing legislation.

In contrast to the attitude on Capitol Hill, I firmly believe our nation is in need of a comprehensive energy strategy that not only reduces emissions, but that is also committed to alternative sources of energy. Furthermore, research into greater efficiency of fossil fuels should be supported so that these technologies are available in the marketplace as soon as possible.



ORGANIC STANDARDS - SEE PAGE 3

Superfund

I am an original co-sponsor of H.R. 3262, the Children's Protection and Community Clean-up Act of 1998. This Superfund reform legislation will allow for quicker resolution of liability to help reduce costs and speed clean-up efforts. The bill also applies child-based health standards to ensure that clean-ups leave our neighborhoods safe for children.

Environment

- Fighting the "Do Nothing" Congress
- Hidden Agenda on the Environment
- Organic Food Authenticity

Transportation

- Widening the Coolidge Bridge
- Route 2 -- A better highway . . .
- New Bikeways

Brownfields provisions are also included with increased funding to clean up sites that have smaller amounts of contamination, yet remain idle or underutilized. It is essential that these industrial tracts of land be returned to the community's economic base.

Endangered Species

Similarly the Endangered Species Act, originally written in 1973, has not been reauthorized for over five years. Currently the Act is reactive rather than proactive in the protection of endangered species. It allows loggers to go into an area, harvest the trees, and then evaluate which species were harmed by the harvesting. I am a co-sponsor of legislation that will bring this policy to a halt. H.R. 2351 will allow us to be proactive in protecting our wildlife and their habitat.

Clean Water

It was almost twenty-six years ago that the Cuyahoga River in Ohio burst into flames as a result of toxic waste. Congress responded with the Clean Water Act. When one-half of our lakes and one-third of our rivers are still unfit for swimming or fishing, reauthorization with updated pollution standards is long overdue. Clearly Congress should move quickly to strengthen water quality.

"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."

Theodore Roosevelt

Hidden Agenda on the Environment

Where the previous Congress openly forwarded its anti-environmental agenda, this Congress has used narrowly written anti-environmental riders quietly tucked into unrelated bills which are less likely to draw a

presidential veto. The Interior Department counted over 29 riders in last year's Appropriations bills alone. Riders have also been used to weaken protection of clean air, clean water, wetlands, and our national forests.

An example of this tactic occurred when a bill to move 8.5 acres of land from the Petroglyph National Monument to the city of Albuquerque for a highway was attached as a rider to a supplemental fiscal 1998 spending bill that provided money for disaster relief and the Bosnia peacekeeping mission. The bill passed, and 8.5 acres of parkland are now part of the New Mexico highway system.

Riders also often eliminate funds from programs that have already been approved, and they are usually created behind closed doors without any committee action or opportunity for public comment.

National Forests

I believe the mission of the US Forest Service should be to limit destructive logging and strengthen the protection of native biodiversity in our national forests. For too long the emphasis has been on timber production, ignoring its harsh effects such as polluted streams and salmon habitats, mudslides, and severe forest fires. Logging has been very costly not only in terms of the environment, but also in terms of costs to the taxpayers. Currently the government spends millions of dollars in subsidies to profitable timber companies for destructive road building in our national forests.

We finally have a Forest Service director who supports sound forest practices instead of promoting logging at all costs. However, there are those in Congress who are threatening to slash the Forest Service's budget if more logging is not allowed. I will continue to work for an environmentally responsible forest policy.

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Route 2 -- A better highway . . .

The truck traffic along Route 2 is getting heavier, which means the road is only going to become more of a safety hazard. To deal with this problem I secured \$3 million to finally complete the design for the safety improvements to the 30-mile, two-lane stretch between Phillipston and Greenfield.

The road will then be reconstructed to widen the shoulders, add new passing lanes, add shoulder rumble strips, and reduce curves and steep grades.

New Bikeways

Not only are bicycle pathways a great form of exercise and entertainment, but they reduce congestion among automobile traffic routes. That's why I requested over \$3.6 million for expanding and building regional bicycle networks.

The Norwottuck Rail Trail in Hampshire County is so popular that I targeted and secured \$3 million towards extending a bicycle and pedestrian path to link four separate trails and five communities in the County. When completed, this initiative would transform four individual trails, the Northampton Bikepath, the Norwottuck Rail-Trail, the Nagle downtown

walkway, and Easthampton's Manhan Rail Trail into a 20 mile, 10 foot wide pathway.

This network will allow thousands of area residents to travel from their homes to employment and retail centers within the five college area. Extending the trails will make the Valley safer and more attractive to bicyclists.

The bill also includes \$675,000 for construction of a new bikeway from Greenfield to Montague. The bikeway will become a network of off-road and shared roadway bicycle paths that connects employment, recreational, cultural, historic and educational facilities in Franklin County's central communities.

These bikeway projects will increase everyone's opportunities to enjoy the scenic natural resources of Hampshire and Franklin Counties!



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