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League of Conservation Voters  
Forum

League of Conservation Voters Forum

New York, New York

October 4, 2000

I want to thank the League of Conservation Voters for providing an opportunity for a debate between my opponent and myself on the environment because I think that we have to raise the visibility of environmental issues and we have to provide more leadership on them as they need to be as I was saying to Paul earlier "in the bloodstream of the body politic" and consider it priorities as we move forward.

But I am happy that this opportunity is available for me to address these issues and to answer the questions and to talk about my own priorities when it comes to the environment. And I am delighted to be here with so many people who are dedicated to protecting the environment here in New York and across America and about our role.

Let me begin with the one message that I hope you will take away from here and that is if I am so honored that the people of New York send me to the United States Senate, I will be a strong and tireless advocate for environment and I will be a leader on environmental issues in the Senate.

I will attempt to build on New York's fine tradition of environmental stewardship, a tradition launched by Teddy Roosevelt and carried forward by Bobby Kennedy and Pat Moynihan and Chuck Schumer.

I look forward to working in partnership with President Al Gore and Vice President Joe Lieberman. And I also will be working with the members of, organizations and advocacy groups, membership groups, like the League, like the Sierra Club which has endorsed me and with all New Yorkers to stand to stand up for the environment not just on the easy votes in Congress -- but on the tough votes that come and will come increasingly in the future.

I want you to know that I will not only be a reliable vote, I intend to be a leader, someone's who is able to reach across party lines, build coalitions, work with the members of the House as well as members of the Senate in order to ensure that the environmental agendas that we have seen progress

on in the last eight years is built on even more firmly in the next six.

You know for more than 30 years, as a lawyer, as a mother, and as an advocate, I've been passionate about giving all children the chance to reach their own God-given potential. That is really how I come to the environment. I've learned over the years that, to be a strong voice for children and families is to be a strong voice for the environment.

Children cannot learn and grow to their greatest potential if the air they breathe leaves them short of breath, if the tap water they drink makes them sick, if the parks and forests cherished by generations are eroded by smog and acid rain.

These and other related environmental issues are really "kitchen table" issues. They need to be at the core of what families talk about and what public officials and political leaders respond to.

I've been hearing about environmental issues all over the state. Many of the people who talk to me I'm not sure consider themselves and certainly don't call themselves environmentalists.

But they are concerned, yesterday, at the Chamber of Commerce in Hamburg outside of Buffalo, it became time for questions and many of the questions were about the use of the surplus and varying affordable tax cuts that I have proposed compared to my opponent.

And then a woman stood up and wanted to know where I stood on water issues affecting the Great Lakes. And that's the kind of question that I am so pleased to hear as I travel around the state because more and more people are recognizing how important the environment is not only to the quality of their lives and their communities, but also to the economy and the sustainability of economic development.

As we've seen from all the progress we've made over the last eight years, protecting our environment and strengthening our economy can go and should go hand in hand if we make a national commitment to act responsibly.

And as I have talked with people throughout the state and seeing the wonders and the beauty of New York from the

Adirondacks to the Finger Lakes to the Sound, I've seen firsthand many of the environmental challenges facing this state - and I am determined to make a difference.

I've been in towns up and down the Hudson and along the Sound, I've talked to people about how their lives have been affected by polluted waters. And as Senator, I will fight to restore our waterways, protect our watershed lands, and ensure cleaner water.

I've also seen firsthand in emergency rooms the bitter effects of pollution on our children and the elderly. That's why I will pick up Senator Moynihan's mantle and work with Representatives Nita Lowey and Henry Waxman to curb air pollution and acid rain.

I've also seen what happens when anti-environmental riders are attached in the dead of night to appropriations bills in the Congress. Every year, they somehow appear when they will not be subjected to public scrutiny. Riders trying to forbid the government from ensuring that government contractors follow environmental regulations. Riders to cut funding for natural monuments. All passed into law without public notice. That's wrong.

I have said that I would support a law that would require any change to any environmental law be subject to open public debate and separate votes in Congress. That would make lawmakers accountable for their votes on the environment. (applause) It will also push into the light of day those who wish to cut environmental funding and let polluters off the hook which requires, as you know, constant vigilance and effort.

If New Yorkers send me to the Senate, I will stand proudly by each and every one of my votes. I will always put clean air and clean water, our natural resources and interests of the people of New York first before the need and dictates of partisan politics.

I am very excited about the opportunities for leadership in the Senate on behalf of the environment. Now, clearly, if we have, as I hope we will, a Gore-Lieberman administration, my work will be much easier but if the alternative, heaven forbid and I don't think it will, were ever to come to pass, I can guarantee you that I will be standing up every opportunity in order to

make clear that this Senator from New York will not go along with big oil and their control over the White House and their attitude (applause) (inaudible).

There are many other issues I have talked about. I have done environmental events. Some of you have attended them from talking about the Sound, talking about the Hudson River, going up to Big Moose Lake, talking about Lake Onondaga - all of the work that I have done to try to educate myself and expose myself to the issues that are important to the environment. And I have said in many different settings that New York is a unique state in many ways but its natural environment is truly unique.

We have everything in New York from Great Lakes to Finger Lake to the Hudson River to the Sound to mountains to rolling countryside. And it is incumbent upon us both to appreciate that and really to fight to protect it and to pass it on to the children and grandchildren that deserve to live a life that is as free of environmental health hazards and is open to the beauties of the environment as we can.

I want to thank you for inviting me here tonight. I look forward to working with the League of Conservation Voters and it is a great pleasure for me to have this opportunity to discuss the environment with you.

Thank you very much.