

Q & A: Congressman Buchanan Discusses Environmental Issues

Congressman Buchanan, many people are worried about scientific evidence that points to a correlation between greenhouse gas emissions and global climate change. Are you personally alarmed, and do you believe Congress is doing enough right now to implement sensible policies?

I'm very concerned about it, and I think Congress needs to do more to pass common-sense solutions to prevent the harmful effects of global warming. For example, I was disappointed that the House energy bill did nothing to increase the corporate average fuel economy standards (CAFE) for automobiles – the fastest growing source of emissions. I have cosponsored a bipartisan bill to increase CAFE standards. I also voted to place responsible mandatory limits on greenhouse gas emissions to reduce pollution.

What do you believe should be our major priority as a nation with regards to our environment and the issue of global climate change?

I think that in addition to placing responsible mandatory limits on harmful emissions and promoting conservation, we need to develop and promote the use of alternative fuel sources. I voted for the clean energy bill to end unnecessary federal subsidies for oil and gas companies and invest instead in conservation and renewables. The bill would also help close federal loopholes that allow oil and gas companies drilling in the Gulf of Mexico to avoid paying royalties.

How do you personally find a balance between caring about environmental issues while promoting sensible economic policies?

In our region, the environment is important to our economy. Most people who visit and move here come to enjoy our white sandy beaches and other natural resources. That is why I am opposed to expanded drilling in the Gulf and working to address red tide.

Americans from all walks of life love our environment too much to see continuous acrimony and modest progress in Washington, D.C. On the eve of another national election, is it realistic to create a comprehensive national environmental policy that addresses renewable energy, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and sustainability initiatives?

One of the complaints I hear most frequently is that partisan politics is preventing

Congress from addressing important issues. As a new member of Congress, I can tell you that there is too much angry partisanship and too little cooperation in Washington. Americans don't care whether a proposal is Republican or Democrat – they want common-sense solutions that work. They want their elected leaders to work together to solve the most pressing challenges facing our nation. Many of us will have legitimate differences of opinion on how to best resolve environmental issues, and I think a good public debate is healthy. But to resolve these issues, I am hopeful that a bipartisan majority will put party politics aside and focus our energies instead on finding solutions we can all support.

Many thoughtful people believe that outbreaks of red tide, the presence of dead zones in the Gulf of Mexico, and recent mega hurricanes are all evidence of the consequences of global change. Do you agree or disagree?

It appears that red tide and hurricanes are occurring more frequently, with greater intensity, and for longer periods of time. Additional research is necessary to understand why and allow us to respond with good public policy decisions. That is why I am fighting for an additional \$90 million in federal funding over the next three years for red tide research and was one of only 44 House Republicans to vote to establish a congressional panel to investigate the dangers of global warming.

It was recently reported that Governor Crist may cut \$2 million in state funding allocated for research on red tide. What can you do to help make sure that red tide research continues to receive funding support? Are there any alternatives to state-funded research? How about federal funding or support from private industry?

I wrote to Governor Crist and urged him to reconsider his proposal to cut state funding for red tide research. I am concerned about the impact the proposed cut would have on efforts to secure federal funds and produce the objective, scientific data with which we can make informed decisions to minimize the impact of red tide. State funding would help demonstrate the importance of addressing this issue and advance ongoing efforts to produce results.

As you may know, I am an original co-sponsor of a bipartisan bill to increase fed-

eral funding to combat red tide. U.S. Reps. Connie Mack (R-FL 14), Kathy Castor (D-FL 11), and I introduced the Save Our Shores Act (H.R. 1091) to provide for \$90 million over the next three years for research. We were proud to have successfully included legislative language similar to the Save Our Shores Act as part of the fiscal year 2008 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations Act – which passed the House of Representatives on July 26, 2007.

Did you have any idea that environmental issues would be so central to our national and state agenda when you were elected to Congress? How is the dialogue about global climate change and other environmental issues changing how you see your role as a national leader and representative of our district?

I have always had a deep appreciation for the environment. Before running for Congress, I was on the board at Mote Marine, and during my campaign, I opposed expanded drilling in the gulf and supported increased federal funding to address red tide.

I moved to this area from Michigan to enjoy the region's natural resources. There is no better place to live and raise a family. I want to preserve and protect it for our enjoyment today and for future generations. They say a politician runs election and a statesman runs for the next generation. I want to improve the community for my kids and hopefully some day my grandchildren. **PC**

