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House receives failing marks from environmental group

Brian Roewe | Feb. 8, 2012 Eco Catholic

In its 2011 National Environmental Scorecard, the League of Conservation Voters labeled the first session of the 112th Congress in the House of Representatives as ?the most anti-environmental session in [its] history.?

The League rates every member of Congress on how they voted on environmental bills and legislation over the past Congressional session, basing this year?s rankings on 11 Senate votes and 35 votes in the House, a sample from the more than 200 votes on environmental-related issues put before its 435 members.

[Full report for the LCV National Environmental 2011 Scorecard] [1]

For states, the highest marks went to Connecticut, Delaware and Rhode Island, all ranking among the top House and Senate scores. At the other end of the spectrum, Kansas ranked among the least environmentally-active legislators in both the Senate and the House.

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Individually, 31 senators and 24 representatives earned a perfect score of 100, while 13 senators and four House members received a score of zero. Sen. Barbara Boxer D-Calif., Sen. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., Rep. Emmanuel Cleaver, D-Mo. and Rep. Diana DeGette, D-Co., were among the members of Congress receiving perfect scores.

Sen. Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga., Trent Franks, R-Ariz. and Michelle Bachmann, R-Minn., were among the lowest scorers.

But for LCV, the story over the past year portrayed a House of Representatives intent on ignoring environmental concerns and public health, stemming from its leaders. The average score among House chairs on committees related to the environment was 10, contrasted with 95 for leaders on similar committees in the Senate. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va., received a score of 11.

?In 2011,
the House Republican leadership unleashed a truly breathtaking and unprecedented assault on the environment and public health, the breadth and depth of which have made the current U.S. House of Representatives the most anti-environmental in our nation?s history,? said LCV President Gene Karpinski in a press release.

The House assault began with H.R. 1, the much-debated spending bill required to provide a budget and avoid a government shut down. In what the LCV called ?at the time the most anti-environmental bill ever,? House representatives voted against amendments that would have prevented free drilling for oil companies on public lands, while proposing riders to the bill that would:

- block the Environmental Protection Agency from issuing new water standards for Florida waters and continuing to regulate under the Clean Water Act;
- cut allocations by 90 percent to the Land and Water Conservation Fund;
- block cleanup of Chesapeake Bay;
- allow off-road vehicles in national parks;
- eliminate presidential power to designate protect lands as national monuments

Other House bills during the session sought to further limit the EPA?s regulative powers on pesticides and greenhouse gases and limit its ability to enforce the Clean Water Act; lift President Obama?s moratorium on off-shore drilling while rejecting off-shore drilling safety reforms for the Gulf of Mexico; bar the Department of Agriculture from implementing a climate change adaptation plan; eliminate energy-efficiency standards for light bulbs and other related programs; and expedite a decision to construct the Keystone XL pipeline across six states.

Much of the anti-environmental legislation approved by the House failed to pass in the Senate, with the Obama administration taking a firm stand for the environment on several key issues. LCV is quick to point out that the Senate and Obama administration did not have perfect environmental records for the year, but their shortcomings paled in comparison to the House.

?LCV is grateful to the Obama administration, allies in the Senate and House, and the millions of people across the country who helped to ensure that the House leadership did not succeed in gutting our nation?s cornerstone environmental and public health protections in 2011,? said Karpinski.

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[1] http://www.lcv.org/scorecard/scorecardweb.pdf