



John Muir Chapter

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Say NO to the “Pollute Our Air and Water” Act

The Wisconsin GOP is taking a page from the national Republican Party playbook. In paybacks to one polluting industry after another, the Bush Administration is rolling back national environmental protection of air, land and water. Representative John Gard and Senator Mary Panzer, who together received almost \$600,000 in political campaign contributions (based on a current search using “Follow the Money” on www.wisdc.org), are rushing through similar rollback initiatives here in Wisconsin.

At a time when Joe and Jane Citizen are concerned about the economy, irresponsible businesses and polluting corporations are cloaking their stealth attacks on our health and heritage in purposely misleading rhetoric about jobs.

The “Pollute Our Air and Water Act” is about avoiding responsibilities and destroying the natural heritage legacy of the state of Wisconsin. The only jobs being created are for undertakers and asthma doctors.

Four out of every 5 Wisconsin men, women and children breathes unhealthy air. Sadly over 400 deaths in our state each year are the result of breathing polluted air from coal-burning power plants. Every lake and river in Wisconsin has a health warning due to widespread mercury contamination of fish, mercury that comes from coal-burning power plants.

Yet this bill will remove authority to require life-saving controls on toxic air emissions.

Polluting corporations are benefiting at the expense of our health and heritage. These rollbacks will cost everyone of us – in the shape of more polluted air and water, toxic dump sites that aren’t cleaned up, thousands acres of open space and public shorelands opened to irresponsible building – all to either plump up the corporate profit margin or make it easier for big business to avoid their responsibilities.

Instead, we need to be working together to improve our quality of life and our economy. We can do that only if we all do our part – individuals, government AND the corporations, and we must all be held accountable.

Pitting the economy versus the environment is “a false choice.” The two are mutually reinforcing. Cleaning up the environment creates jobs, good jobs and in fact creates the kind of good jobs Americans have been losing. The hardest hit sector of the American economy has been manufacturing – which has lost 2.54 million jobs since the Bush administration took office in January 2001 (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

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We can only have a healthy economy by protecting the environment and vice versa. Time and again we've learned that good environmental policy leads to good jobs. For example, investments in developing our nation's wind and solar power potential will create manufacturing jobs, make us more competitive globally, cut our dependence of foreign oil and reduce pollution that is endangering our families' health and safety in our own neighborhoods.

Bad environmental policy costs jobs. We call on the legislature, both sides of the aisle, to help make Wisconsin the state where families can be assured of healthy air, clean water, safe homes and productive jobs.

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