



FROM THE CANDIDATES

With an eye on the upcoming election, RFF asked the two leading candidates for the presidency to respond to three environmental policy questions. Printed below are the verbatim responses supplied by their respective campaign staffs.

RFF: Should cost be one of the factors that regulatory agencies consider when setting health standards, as under the Clean Air Act or the Occupational Safety and Health Act?

Clinton: For laws such as the Clean Air Act or OSHA that set standards based on public health and safety, cost should be taken into account in the implementation of the standard. During his first year in office, President Clinton issued an executive order to require the use of cost-benefit analysis and sound science to support regulatory actions.

President Clinton opposes regulatory “reform” legislation that would make it more difficult—or impossible—to protect our families’ health and provide them with safe air to breathe, clean water to drink, and healthy food to eat.

President Clinton strongly opposed



both the Contract with America and Senator Dole’s bills for regulatory “reform,” as they would have rolled back a generation of health, safety, and environmental laws.

President Clinton’s and Vice President Gore’s reinventing government efforts have shown that health and environmental standards can be met with a more efficient and less bureaucratic approach that does not endanger our health.

Dole: Yes. We should ensure that the resources we as a society dedicate to solving a problem are reasonably related to what we gain in the end. Costs and benefits—including those that are nonquantifiable—need to be balanced when deciding the appropriate levels of health protection to target. When it comes to costs we need to recognize not only compliance costs to industry but diversion of time, labor, intellectual capital, and other resources that might address the greatest health risks first and achieve better health overall for more people.

We fool ourselves if we assume that costs are not considered currently when setting health standards. So far, we have winked at the notion. But it is fairer to be honest with the American people about the overall costs and benefits of a regulatory decision.

Bob Dole has sponsored legislation to ensure that benefits justify costs for any major federal regulation, using risk assessment and sound science as tools. Regrettably, the Clinton Administration opposed that effort.

RFF: Should additional measures be taken now to control emissions of greenhouse gases

like carbon dioxide? If so, what form should these measures take?

Clinton: Yes. The latest international assessment by almost 2,500 scientists concluded that human greenhouse gas emissions have already had “a discernible human influence on global climate.” Failure to act now could subject us to unacceptable economic costs and environmental harm from climate change—including losses in coastal regions from sea level rise, increased fatalities from heat stress, the spread of tropical diseases to our nation, and more frequent and severe storms. Climate change is a global problem that requires a global solution.

President Clinton and Vice President Gore are working to fully implement their Climate Change Action Plan, issued soon after taking office. This plan includes more than fifty largely voluntary measures to cut emissions of greenhouse gases. These measures cut energy use and save money. The business community has been strongly supportive. Yet the Republican Congress dramatically cut these programs. The Clinton Administration is also vigorously pursuing a meaningful and realistic international agreement under the Framework Convention on Climate Change to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on a global basis.

Dole: Most scientists agree that a natural greenhouse effect exists, and that concentrations of greenhouse gases are increasing in the atmosphere. However, no agreement exists on whether or how to address the issue. Even the United Nations expert panel on climate change has recognized this uncertainty. Further research is needed to determine if responses to atmospheric buildup of greenhouse gases are required,

and, if so, what the responses should be.

Despite scientific uncertainty about the role of human activity in climate change, the Clinton Administration has leapfrogged over scientific inquiry and now favors narrow measures to further cut greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration has abandoned the voluntary approach to reducing greenhouse gases that was the keystone of the 1992 UN climate change convention and the key to the United States' marked reduction in such emissions since that time.

President Clinton has chosen to go further in the wrong direction of command-and-control regulation at a time when he claims to want more flexibility to find the most efficient environmental solutions. Instead of voluntary measures, he advocates binding targets and timetables, which would be very costly, both to our economy and to our lifestyle.

Let's approach this issue in the right way. The United States should be at the forefront of the search for a scientifically sound approach to global climate change. Let's not retreat to command-and-control regulation with little scientific grounding. U.S. companies, such as American auto manufacturers working to develop a new generation of vehicles, should continue to be encouraged to pursue advanced research that may reduce greenhouse gases over the long term. U.S. companies should be encouraged to work with foreign governments and their industries to share emission reduction technologies with those countries that need them most.

And once the science is clearer, the responsibility of addressing international climate change should be shared by all countries, not disproportionately by the United States.

RFF: Should the federal government compensate property owners whose land is rendered less valuable as a result of environmental or natural resource protection policies? How would compensation be funded while meeting deficit reduction goals?

Clinton: President Clinton has acted throughout his term to protect private property. Any American who is willing to work hard and play by the rules should be able to buy a home and provide for his or her family in a neighborhood that is free from crime, drugs, and toxic contamination. The so-called "property rights" or "takings" legislation introduced as part of the Republicans' Contract with America and in the Senate by Bob Dole does not protect private property. These measures say that no one is required to follow the law unless they are paid to do so. This is not what President Clinton believes is the meaning of citizenship. These Republican measures would cost taxpayers tens of billions of dollars and weaken safeguards for public health, safety, and the environment. President Clinton would veto such legislation because it is bad for property owners, taxpayers, and the environment.

Dole: If the government restricts the use of your private property to construct a highway, expand a military base, or create a national park you will be compensated. Even if you retain title to your land or can use other parts of your property, you are compensated for that portion used by the government for public benefit. Such compensation is required by the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. And the Supreme Court has affirmed that it is the law of the land.

That the government wants to restrict



the use of your private property to protect the environment should not affect your right to compensation, as long as the property is contributing to the public good. In fact, incorporating such compensation into policies to protect wetlands or other natural resources would give landowners the incentive to be good environmental stewards, while overregulation without fair compensation would not.

Today, litigation against the government by aggrieved landowners costs the Treasury hundreds of millions of dollars. According to the Congressional Budget Office, legislation to protect private property rights in environmental protection cases would preclude needless costs and expensive litigation, helping to eliminate the federal deficit and balance the budget. Such legislation would also encourage the government to assess the impact of its regulations before issuing them and to work with landowners, not against them.

But private landowners should not be paid if their land is regulated to prevent pollution, which is harmful activity, often referred to in common law as a "nuisance." This is a legitimate exercise of the government's police power. As a strong supporter of legislation ensuring clean air and water, Bob Dole has fought to punish polluters, not to compensate them. ☺