



South Bay Mobilization

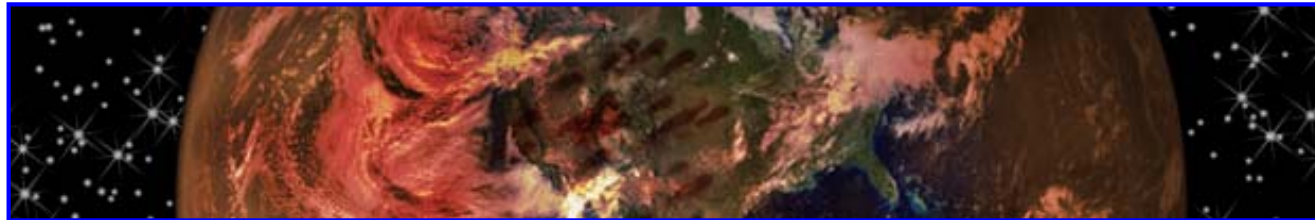
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GOP to Bush: Keep Denying Climate Science REPUBLICANS AIM FOR SOFTER, GREENER ENVIRONMENTAL TALK

The New York Times, March 2, 2003

WASHINGTON -- Over the last six months, the Republican Party has subtly refocused its message on the environment, an issue that a party strategist called "the single biggest vulnerability for the Republicans and especially for George Bush" in a memorandum encouraging the new approach.

The Republicans, as the memorandum advised them, have softened their language to appeal to suburban voters, speaking out for protecting national parks and forests, advocating investment in environmental technologies, and shifting emphasis to the future rather than the present. In interviews, Republican politicians and their aides said they agreed with the strategist, Frank Luntz, that it was important to pay attention to what

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his memorandum, written before the November elections, called "the environmental communications battle."

In his memorandum, Luntz urges that the term "climate change" be used instead of "global warming," because "while 'global warming' has catastrophic communications attached to it, 'climate change' sounds a more controllable and less emotional challenge." Also, he wrote, "conservationist" conveys a "moderate, reasoned, common-sense position" while "environmentalist" has the "connotation of extremism."

President George W. Bush's speeches on the environment show that the terms "global warming" and "environmentalist" had largely disappeared by late last summer. The terms appeared in a number of Bush's speeches in 2001, but now the White House fairly consistently uses "climate change" and "conservationist."

National environmental groups say the shift has blunted the edge of Republican attacks. "They are not playing defense anymore," said Kim Haddow, a consultant for the Sierra Club who has helped counter some Republican advertisements. "It's like a tennis game. The ball is back in our court, and we need to spend time and energy educating voters."

Many new Republican communication strategies match the recommendations of the 16-page environmental memorandum put together by the Luntz Research Cos., the consulting firm run by Luntz, who was also one of the drafters of Contract with America, the manifesto of House Republicans under Newt Gingrich, the former speaker.

The memorandum was given to The New York Times by the Environmental Working Group, an advocacy group critical

of Bush administration policies. "They are showing the message discipline they need to get these anti-environmental policies past suburban voters," said Ken Cook, president of the organization.


One section of the memorandum, "Winning the Global Warming Debate," asserts that many voters believe there is a lack of consensus about global warming among scientists. "Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled, their views about global warming will change accordingly," it says.

"Therefore you need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue." Among the ways to "challenge the science," the memorandum says, is to "be even more active in recruiting experts who are sympathetic to your view and much more active in making them part of your message" because "people are more willing to trust scientists than politicians."

Each party says Luntz's advice played a role in elections last fall, including the Senate race in Colorado, where the Republican incumbent, Wayne Allard, ran advertisements promoting his work with the Great Sand Dunes National Park and cleaning up nuclear weapons plants. "The thrust of the memorandum is consistent with what we tried to do with our campaign, to take issues that have real impact on people in Colorado and work on those problems," said Dick Wadhams, a spokesman for Allard. "The Sierra Club and League of Conservation Voters spent millions of dollars attacking Senator Allard and it didn't work."

That kind of success will encourage more Republicans to embrace these strategies, party officials say.

"We have not engaged in the discussion as enthusiastically



as we should on occasion - there are so many governors around the country that have sterling environmental records," said Marc Racicot, chairman of the Republican National Committee. "We are going to talk about these issues a lot over the next election cycle."

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