

## MEMO

To: Interested Parties  
From: Gene Karpinski & Navin Nayak, League of Conservation Voters  
Re: The 2012 Elections & the Shifting Politics of Energy  
Date: November 7, 2012

Two years ago, it was clear that the 2012 election would be a daunting one for the environmental community. We knew that oil and coal-backed groups would pour unprecedented resources into key races to try to defeat pro-environment candidates and elect more climate deniers. With the \$200 million the Koch Brothers alone had pledged to spend, pro-environment candidates should have been wiped off the map. Instead, we saw a very different outcome last night.

While we can never match the spending of the fossil fuel industry, we knew from extensive polling that voters are with us on the issues; they strongly support clean energy and want leaders who will confront the challenge of global warming. Our goal this cycle was to win priority races by ensuring that we invested enough so that voters would hear our message. If we could do this, we believed that we could show that there are consequences for siding with oil companies and denying global warming. We also wanted to demonstrate to our allies that there was an effective political force that had their back in the face of unprecedented attacks.

Given the results from last night, it's clear that there has been a shift in the politics of energy and climate change. As promised, outside groups funded by the fossil fuel industry spent heavily. According to an analysis by the Center for America Progress Action, outside groups funded by polluters spent more than \$270 million on TV ads in the last two months alone. Yet, President Obama was re-elected, the Senate became decidedly more pro-environment, and a handful of House incumbents targeted specifically for denying climate change were defeated.

In short, candidates that stood by the environmental community and a clean energy agenda were overwhelmingly elected, while candidates tied to oil and coal companies lost. Being a climate change denier is not only an unconscionable position, it is now increasingly bad politics.

At the same time, LCV and the environmental community have emerged as a more effective and significant force in electoral politics, capable to defend climate champions and pressure deniers in targeted races. While we will never discount the financial advantage the oil and coal interests will continue to enjoy, the 2012 election demonstrates that when we have the resources behind us, our message resonates more.

This cycle, LCV and its affiliated political committees spent nearly \$14 million overall—including \$10 million against our Dirty Dozen candidates alone. We picked our targets explicitly because they denied scientific consensus on climate change or opposed taking action on the issue. While one House race has yet to be called, we appear likely defeat 11 of the Dirty Dozen, a 91 percent win record, which is by far our best ever. At the same time, LCV Action Fund raised or contributed more than \$2 million for pro-environment candidates this cycle, far more than ever before.

### **The Senate Landscape:**

Senate bottom-line: LCV's top political priority this cycle was to defend our allies and elect more climate champions to the Senate. We won 8 of our 9 priority races. The Chamber of Commerce and their Big Oil allies spent \$62 million in those 9 Senate races and won just one.

- LCV and its affiliated political committees spent more than \$8 million in Senate races. In six races (MT, VA, NM, MA, AZ and ME) we were among the top three independent expenditures supporting the pro-environment candidate, including expenditures by the DSCC and Majority PAC.
- The New Mexico Senate race was supposed to be a toss-up race, but the electoral program of six environmental groups (Defenders of Wildlife Action, Environment America, National Wildlife Action, NRDC Action Fund, Sierra Club, and LCV) transformed the race from a toss-up to a comfortable lead for Rep. Martin Heinrich, even with Karl Rove's groups and the Chamber of Commerce spending nearly \$3 million in the race, much of it attacking Heinrich on energy.
- Not a single incumbent senator who voted to defend the EPA's actions on global warming was defeated. Not one. Not Sherrod Brown, not Bob Casey and not even Jon Tester. This was not due to a lack of trying; more than \$20 million was spent against Sherrod Brown and more than \$12 million against Jon Tester, with much of those resources focused squarely attacking those candidates on energy issues. On the other hand, candidates like George Allen, Heather Wilson and Scott Brown who were targeted for their anti-environmental positions, all lost.
- Through LCV Action Fund's *GiveGreen* bundling program, environmental donors were the largest fundraisers for Jon Tester, Tim Kaine, Martin Heinrich, Richard Carmona, and Sherrod Brown.

### **The Presidential Landscape:**

Presidential bottom-line: Clean energy is critical to winning key battleground states particularly in appealing to voters in the growing suburbs. The millions of dollars spent by oil and coal-funded groups and by the Romney campaign touting the importance of fossil fuels had limited success; support for oil and coal is shrinking to smaller and smaller parts of the country.

- The re-election of President Obama also demonstrates that the politics of energy are shifting. Mitt Romney's first priority to grow the economy was to increase domestic drilling, build the Keystone pipeline and boost coal production. But according to several polls, voters trusted President Obama more on energy policy, which focused on building a clean energy future.
- From the start of the campaign, outside groups funded by the Koch Brothers attacked President Obama's clean energy agenda as a wasteful boondoggle. The president doubled-down on his commitment to clean energy and its importance to our economy throughout the campaign.
- In states like Colorado and Iowa, Romney was repeatedly criticized for opposing the wind industry, which is creating thousands of jobs in both states. LCV and LCV Victory Fund spent nearly \$2 million in Colorado alone in the presidential race, including a hard-hitting testimonial ad highlighting Romney's anti-wind energy policies. Other than Priorities USA Action, we were the largest effort on the president's behalf in the state.

### **The House Landscape:**

House bottom-line: While the House remains under anti-environmental leadership, LCV has put climate deniers on the defensive by showing that there can be political consequences. We were successful in defeating deniers in competitive districts as varied as TX-23, NY-24, IL-8 and possible in CA-7, though this last race hasn't been called yet.

- Early this cycle, LCV defeated two Democrats in primaries specifically because of their opposition to climate and energy legislation. We were the largest independent expenditures in defeating Representative Tim Holden (PA-17) and former Representative Ciro Rodriguez (TX-23), which we hope sent a clear message about the importance of supporting a clean energy future.
- Beyond our work in primaries, we wanted to send a message to politicians: denying climate science is not only unconscionable, but politically risky. We launched a new program, *The Flat Earth Five*, which targeted five climate-denying House incumbents, all of whom were in competitive races. We specifically targeted these members in TV ads, mail and billboards on the issue of global warming. We spent \$3 million on this program and four of them appear to be headed for defeat.

### **The States Landscape:**

States bottom-line: The state LCVs played a bigger role than they ever have in key races across the country, helping to obtain pro-environment legislatures in Colorado, Minnesota and Maine, and appear poised to elect pro-environment governors in Washington and Montana.

- Washington Conservation Voters, our state LCV partner, made its largest independent expenditure ever, by investing more than \$750,000 in helping to elect Jay Inslee as the governor of Washington. Inslee campaigned aggressively on the importance of clean energy in rebuilding the economy and demonstrated the effectiveness of this message. While the race hasn't been called yet, Inslee holds a steady lead. We anticipate that he will be the greenest governor in the country.
- As part of our state-level Dirty Dozen program, the state LCVs targeted 12 of the most anti-environmental legislators in the country who were in tight races and were successful in defeating at least seven of them. This include victories in states such as CO, MN, MT, NM, NY, OR, and PA. In each of these races, the state LCV played a lead role in defeating the state Dirty Dozen candidate.
- Across the country the state LCVs endorsed 1077 state and local candidates, spending \$2.6 million in 192 targeted races, helping to elect 98 pro-conservation candidates, with 28 others too close to call.
- The environment was a winner in 12 state ballot measures, including Amendment 1 in Alabam, which extended the Forever Wild land conservation program and Proposition 29 in California, which is projected to create 40,000 jobs and raise \$500 million per year for energy efficiency and clean energy projects in the state.

### **LCV's Role in Key Races**

2012 was LCV's biggest election cycle ever. We spent more on politics in 2012 than in the last three cycles combined. Even more importantly, our expanded resources in just 17 races, enabling us to play a decisive role in shaping the

political landscape in Washington. With one race still outstanding, it seems likely that we will have won 15 of our 17 priority races.

Our biggest priority was the Senate, where we were focused on building a core of climate champions committed to reducing global warming pollution. We picked nine Senate races, all of which involved a stark contrast between the candidates on global warming and energy. We spent \$8 million on these races alone. Here is an overview of our activities in some of those races:

#### Virginia Senate (\$2 million)

George Allen is an unabashed climate denier who in his six years in the Senate amassed an appalling 1 percent score on LCV's National Environmental Scorecard. We believed that Virginia voters, particularly in Northern Virginia, would undoubtedly view his continued support for billions of dollars in tax breaks for oil companies, his support for outsourcing Virginia jobs, including in clean energy, and his opposition to cutting pollution, as extreme and a bridge too far to send him back to Washington. Behind the DSCC and Majority PAC, LCV was the third largest IE supporting Tim Kaine. We spent \$1.1 million on two [TV ads](#) in partnership with Majority PAC. In addition to our ad buys, we ran what was likely the largest mail program in the race—sending up to [seven tested pieces](#) of mail on Allen's extreme priorities to more than 500,000 voters—one out of every seven likely voters in the state.

#### New Mexico Senate (\$1.8 million by environmental groups, including \$380,000 by LCV)

When Senator Bingaman announced his retirement last year, the New Mexico Senate race was viewed as a race that would remain competitive through Election Day. Yet six environmental groups ([Defenders of Wildlife Action](#), Environment America, [National Wildlife Action](#), [NRDC Action Fund](#), [Sierra Club](#), and [LCV](#)) executed a targeted and comprehensive campaign in the summer that shifted this race decidedly in Martin Heinrich's favor. Over two months, environmental groups went head to head with Crossroads GPS and American Crossroads. In [TV ads](#), in the [mail](#) and at the door, we highlighted Wilson's votes to protect oil companies that polluted New Mexico's drinking water. In those two months, this race shifted from a virtual tie to a nine point lead for Martin Heinrich, despite millions spent on Wilson's behalf. While the Chamber of Commerce and Rove's groups spent nearly \$3 million on Wilson's behalf, their message on energy never resonated with voters and failed to gain any traction.

#### Montana Senate (\$1.5 million)

With a lifetime LCV score of just 6 percent, Dennis Rehberg is as far out of the mainstream on environmental policies as any member of Congress. Moreover, Jon Tester was the only Senator in a competitive race to support EPA action to address global warming at every opportunity. LCV knew from the start that this would be a close race, and we therefore invested in the largest field program by an outside group. Our \$1.1 million program registered nearly 30,000 Tester supporters to vote by mail, many of whom are sporadic voters. These types of targeted field programs play to the strength of a grassroots organization like LCV. In addition to our registration program, we targeted 40,000 voters to vote early and another 40,000 to vote on Election Day. Moreover, more than 350 LCV members volunteered with the Tester campaign, helping bolster his field program. Finally, we also partnered with Montana Hunters & Anglers Leadership Fund during the summer on two hard-hitting [TV ads](#) against Rehberg. Meanwhile, the NRSC attacked Tester for his ties to the [environmental community](#). But their assumption that Tester's ties to the environmental community would sink him didn't pan out.

### Massachusetts Senate (\$1.1 million)

As Scott Brown's campaign admitted, LCV's issue ads in November 2011 had a major impact on Brown's favorability. As voters found out just how anti-environmental Brown's voting record actually was, the less likely they were to re-elect him. As a result, Brown proposed a candidate pledge essentially limiting advertising in the race. While the race still remained close in late August, LCV launched one of the largest canvass programs in the state. We knocked on 400,000 doors including more than 100,000 GOTV contacts in the final 4 days. We also had more than 600 LCV members volunteer with the Warren campaign, provide grassroots support to her field operation. In addition, we sent [4 pieces of mail](#) on Brown's anti-environmental votes to 150,000 additional households in the state. With the DSCC and Majority PAC not spending in this race, LCV played a lead role in helping build a robust ground game that was critical to Elizabeth Warren's election to the Senate.

### Wisconsin Senate (\$1 million)

The Wisconsin senate race was one of LCV's last big races. Labor unions and women's groups helped to shift this race in Rep. Tammy Baldwin's direction during the fall, highlighting Tommy Thompson's extensive ties to Washington special interests. Yet in the final weeks of the campaign, the race remained one of the closest in the country. With a lifetime LCV score of 97 percent, we knew that Baldwin would be a champion in the Senate. In the final week of the campaign, we launched two campaign ads: [one positive](#) touting Baldwin's leadership on clean energy, which aired in the Madison media market, and [one comparative ad](#), which aired in the swing Milwaukee media market. The final week buy of \$1 million was the largest single TV buy that LCV conducted this cycle without partnering with another group.

### Connecticut Senate (\$300,000)

After spending \$50 million to try winning a Senate seat in 2010, it was clear that McMahon would spend heavily again. Indeed, McMahon spent \$15 million just over the summer to re-invent herself and close the gap with Rep. Chris Murphy. After the race narrowed in September, LCV Action Fund launched a [six-piece mail](#) program to 90,000 households in the state. Our program solely focused on households in the expensive New York City media market, as mail provided an efficient way to communicate with voters that couldn't easily be reached by TV. In addition, we had more than 200 LCV members volunteer directly with Murphy campaign. Murphy has a lifetime LCV score of 98 percent, and we are thrilled to have that kind of leadership in the US Senate.

### Maine Senate (\$100,000)

The surprise retirement of Sen. Olympia Snowe made the Maine Senate race a late addition to the competitive races in the country. As the most viable pro-environment candidate in the race, LCV was proud to endorse Independent former Governor Angus King. While King appeared to enjoy a comfortable lead heading into the fall, a rash of outside money from special interests such as the Chamber of Commerce and Crossroads GPS made this a more competitive race than expected. In mid-October, LCV partnered with the Sierra Club Independent Action to launch a [TV buy](#) in the Portland media market, which covers 70 percent of the state. Our ad contrasted King's leadership on clean energy and global warming with his main opponent Charlie Summers, who is a Tea Party candidate that opposes renewable energy. As an Independent committed to solving the climate crisis, we expect Angus King to be a critical new voice in the Senate.

### **Flat Earth Five: Defeating House Incumbents** (\$3 million)

In addition to our work in the Senate, LCV announced a new program targeting five [climate change deniers](#) in the House. We spent \$3 million on this program to send a clear message that there can be political consequences for denying the science of climate change and blocking action on the issue.

The Flat Earth Five were:

- [Dan Benishek \(MI-1\)](#)
- [Ann Marie Buerkle \(NY-24\)](#)
- [Francisco Canseco \(TX-23\)](#)
- [Dan Lungren \(CA-7\)](#)
- [Joe Walsh \(IL-8\)](#)

Across these five races, LCV ran 10 TV ads, delivered 10 pieces of mail to nearly 100,000 voters, and ran [billboards](#) in the candidates' districts. This program builds on the early victories in Democratic primaries where we defeated two candidates specifically because they opposed President Obama's climate bill.

While the CA-7 race hasn't been called yet, [we appear likely to win 4 of these competitive races](#). Even more importantly, the NRCC, energy backed outside groups and Francisco Canseco spent millions [running TV ads attacking](#) Pete Gallego for being tied to "radical environmentalists." At the same time, [LCV ran 5 ads](#) targeting Canseco for his opposition to clean energy. Even in Texas, our message prevailed.

### **Presidential Race** (\$2.2 million)

While our \$2 million investment in the presidential race will pale in comparison to the billions spent, we maintained a sharp focus on two states (Colorado and Nevada) and highlighted the stark contrast between [President Obama](#) and Governor Romney on clean energy, [global warming](#) and oil subsidies. We spent nearly \$2 million in Colorado running two TV ads. Our [first ad](#), a partnership with Priorities USA Action, ran in April and targeted Romney for his ties to the oil industry and his support for billions in subsidies. In October, in advance of the first presidential debate, we ran a [testimonial spot](#) from a laid off wind industry worker highlighting Romney's opposition to clean energy. We put \$500,000 behind the spot in early October and another \$850,000 in the final week of the campaign. We knew that in Colorado, in which the wind industry is thriving, Romney's extreme position of opposing clean energy would be a liability.

In addition to our ads in Colorado, LCV made our largest investment yet to mobilize our members to volunteer in this election. We had more than 7,000 LCV members volunteer to help re-elect President Obama. As highlighted earlier, about 3,000 additional LCV members volunteered on four Senate races and a couple of House races. Again, this type of grassroots effort plays to the strength of grassroots organizations such as LCV and were an important addition to the impressive field operation assembled by the Obama campaign.

Finally, we also knew that Romney's decision to ridicule global warming and assert that he had no interest in addressing the issue would be viewed as callous with voters particularly in light of the devastating storm that walloped the East coast last week. We therefore launched a final spot called "[Leaders Lead](#)" which aired on national cable for the last few days of the campaign.

### Dirty Dozen

Governor Mitt Romney	Defeated
Rep. Dennis Rehberg	Defeated
Rep. Heather Wilson	Defeated
Sen. George Allen	Defeated
Linda McMahon	Defeated
Josh Mandel	Defeated
Rep. Francisco Canseco	Defeated
Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle	Defeated
Rep. Joe Walsh	Defeated
Rep. Dan Lungren	Trailing
Rep. Tim Holden	Defeated
Rep. Dan Benishek	Won