

JOHN KERRY



BIOGRAPHY

John Kerry was born December 11, 1943 in Denver, Colorado. He received his bachelor's degree from Yale University in 1966. Upon graduating, he served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy in Vietnam, where he earned a Silver Star, Bronze Star, and three Purple Hearts. Kerry later became one of the war's most vocal opponents. After a failed congressional bid in 1972, he earned a law degree from Boston College Law School and served as first assistant district attorney for Massachusetts' Middlesex County from 1977 to 1982. The following year, he was elected lieutenant governor, and in 1984, he was elected to the U.S. Senate, where he has served ever since. He is currently ranking member of the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee. He is married to Teresa Heinz Kerry, and has two daughters and three stepsons.

OVERVIEW

With a history of engagement that extends back to the first Earth Day in 1970, Senator Kerry is one of America's premier environmental leaders. His voting record has earned him the highest lifetime LCV ranking of all the presidential candidates, and he has taken a leadership role in promoting higher fuel efficiency standards for cars and trucks, combating attempts to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and in overturning efforts to weaken the Clean Air Act. On a range of domestic issues—from clean air to clean water to public lands—Kerry has repeatedly staked out pro-environment positions. His record on international issues is equally distinguished: he sponsored legislation to incorporate environmental protections into trade negotiations and has participated in international climate change negotiations beginning at the 1992 Earth Summit and extending through Kyoto. In his run for the presidency, Kerry has made the environment a central issue, devoting several significant forums to his plans for environmental action if elected. Kerry participated in LCV's June 2003 presidential environmental debate.

John Kerry												
Lifetime Environmental Voting Record (1985–2002)												
Year	1985–1986	1987–1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
LCV Score	92	100	100	100	93	92	100	92	100	100	100	100

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	Lifetime
LCV Score	100	86	88	94	96

Note: Kerry has the highest lifetime LCV rating of any of the presidential candidates.

LCV's Scorecard rates members of Congress on their environmental voting records for each year by assigning them a percentage score. LCV's scores are based on the number of correct votes or actions taken by the legislator versus the total number of votes or actions monitored by the League. There are no excused absences. The lifetime percentage is not an average of the yearly percentages.

THE CANDIDATE IN HIS OWN WORDS

I believe that with leadership from the White House we can take bold steps toward protecting our environment. I hope to put an end to the false argument that America must choose between a growing economy and a clean environment. Americans can unite behind policies that will protect our natural resources and create jobs inventing, designing, manufacturing and constructing the clean technologies of tomorrow. If we offer America a better choice than the divisive rhetoric of the Bush Administration and others who want to turn back the clock on environmental protections, we can build a better future. As President, I hope to enact a federal budget with strong funding for public health and environmental programs; help the millions of Americans facing environmental injustice; enact an energy policy that will protect the environment and make America more secure, including the development of renewable fuels and energy efficiency; significantly reduce sulfur, nitrogen, carbon and mercury emissions; enact policies to protect our water, including reducing runoff pollution; protect our national parks and wild lands for future generations; reduce the toxic chemicals released into our environment; establish America as a leader the international effort to protect the global environment, including the development of a binding treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and a global plan to protect our oceans; craft free trade agreements that protect workers and the environment; and create thousands of good jobs developing clean energy and environmental technologies and infrastructure.

— John Kerry, responding to the League of Conservation Voters' presidential questionnaire.

ISSUE AREAS

John Kerry's campaign returned the LCV presidential questionnaire; excerpts from his questionnaire are included throughout this profile. Due to his long record of service in the Senate, we have included only Kerry's most significant votes and legislative actions on the environment rather than attempting to catalog all of his environmental actions.

► CLEAN AIR

Senator Kerry has a strong interest in clean air issues and a record of leadership dating back to 1983 when, as lieutenant governor of Massachusetts, he co-chaired the National Governors Association's Acid Rain Task Force and issued a report calling for concerted action against acid rain.¹ In his first year in the Senate, he introduced the National Acid Rain Reduction Act to reduce emissions of acid rain-causing pollutants by setting new standards for coal-burn-

ing power plants and light trucks and establishing a fund to pay for reducing emissions.² Later, in 1987, he called for Senate hearings into the global impact of acid rain and criticized the Reagan administration for its lack of leadership on the issue.³

Kerry was a key Senate leader in combating efforts to weaken the Clean Air Act in 1990, pushing for legislation to create stronger "anti-smog" regulations and promote cleaner air.⁴ He has voiced strong opposition to the Bush administration's "Clear Skies" initiative, arguing that it would allow more pollution than current clean air regulations.⁵ Kerry also supports efforts to reduce emissions of mercury, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and carbon dioxide from power plants and is a cosponsor of the Clean Power Act of 2003, which would, by 2009, cap carbon dioxide emissions from power plants at 1990 levels, reduce sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide pollution by 75 percent, and cut mercury pollution by 90 percent.⁶

Kerry is also opposed to the Bush administration's efforts to roll back the "new source review" require-

ment in the Clean Air Act, which requires that older plants install pollution control equipment when expanding or upgrading their operations.⁷ In 2003, he voted for an amendment to delay the new source review rule change pending a study of its effects on human health and pollution levels.⁸

In 2000, Kerry endorsed a Democratic Leadership Council manifesto, “A New Agenda for the New Decade” that supports giving factories and power plants tradable emissions credits for reducing greenhouse gases and other pollutants.⁹

► CLEAN WATER

As senator, Kerry has worked to strengthen federal protection of the nation’s waters. In his first year in the Senate, Kerry sponsored a bill that would have provided grants to states to mitigate water quality problems due to acid rain.¹⁰ More recently, he voiced strong opposition to the Bush administration’s attempt to weaken drinking water standards for arsenic, and he voted to prevent the administration from returning to a standard that would allow more arsenic in drinking water.¹¹ During the 1995 Senate debate to reauthorize the Safe Drinking Water Act, Kerry voted to strengthen drinking water standards to prevent outbreaks of harmful microbes,¹² to require community water systems that provide water to more than 500 people to report water contaminants and health risks to their customers,¹³ and to provide states with \$7.6 billion in grants and loans to assist local communities in meeting water quality standards.¹⁴

Kerry has criticized the Bush administration for trying to exclude seasonal streams and so-called “isolated” wetlands from the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act and has co-sponsored legislation to affirm the “historic scope” of the law.¹⁵ He has also pledged to renew the federal government’s commitment to “no net loss” of wetlands.¹⁶ In addition, he has supported legislation to deny federal funding for expanding concentrated animal farming operations (CAFOs), whose discharges have contaminated waterways nationwide with polluted runoff.¹⁷

► TOXICS

In his LCV questionnaire, Kerry stated his strong support for the public’s right to know about toxic chemicals in their communities and homes: “The American people have a right to government that will be vigilant and uncompromising in protecting them from toxic chemicals. Companies should be required to disclose

to the EPA and the public all toxics used in their facilities or present in their products, not just those that are directly released to the environment or disposed at hazardous waste facilities.” He has consistently voted to support the Toxics Release Inventory that requires companies to report releases of toxic substances into the environment.¹⁸

Senator Kerry also endorses a rapid phase-out of mercury and notes “some of the most significant advances in protecting the environment and public health have come from just such phase outs.”¹⁹ He has co-sponsored legislation to protect children from exposure to lead²⁰ and co-sponsored a bill that would have reduced pesticide use in schools.²¹

In 2001, Kerry co-sponsored legislation, ultimately signed into law, that promotes the cleanup of brownfields sites and provides financial assistance for brownfields revitalization.²²

Superfund

Kerry has a strong record of support for cleaning up toxic waste sites. He has co-sponsored legislation to reinstate the “polluter pays” tax that pays for Superfund cleanups and voted in early 2003 to reinstate the tax.²³ At an environmental forum sponsored by LCV in June 2003, he argued that “the funding of Superfund is a disgrace by this President. He has changed the ‘polluter pays’ principles. I am going to restore those principles, and we are going to continue to be able to fund Superfund. There are 99 sites in California alone. And if you look at where most of those sites are, you will find poor people on whom they’ve been shunted.”²⁴

► PUBLIC LANDS

John Kerry is one of the Senate’s leading voices for the protection of our public lands. A key player in the fight against oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, he also opposes the Bush administration’s decision to limit Bureau of Land Management lands eligible for wilderness protection. In addition, he has strongly supported the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which provides funding to buy land for national parks, forests and wildlife refuges as well as for state parks.²⁵

National Forests

Kerry has consistently voted to limit subsidies for logging in national forests. In 2000, he voted to cut subsidies for timber sales in national forests and to use a portion of the savings to increase funding for fighting

forest fires.²⁶ In 1999, he voted to cut timber subsidies in the Interior appropriations bill and voted in favor of allowing wildlife surveys in national forests as part of the forest planning process.²⁷ He has also opposed government credits for timber road building.²⁸ He supports the Clinton administration's ban on new road construction and logging in roadless areas of national forests. A critic of President Bush's Healthy Forests initiative, he favors "a balanced approach to wildfire prevention that provides sufficient resources and responsible fuel reduction around at-risk communities without weakening environmental laws or circumventing public participation."²⁹

Mining

Senator Kerry has compiled a strong pro-environment record on mining issues, consistently voting in support of reforming the outdated mining laws that have been in place for more than a century.³⁰ Speaking on the Senate floor in July 2000, he argued for adopting reforms that would require mining companies to pay, for the first time, royalties for the minerals that they extract from public lands and to pay to clean up toxic waste: "We should not have to depend on the good will of the mining industry to protect public land—the rules should be clear, they should be strong, and they should be enforced. American citizens should not carry the burden of fiscal and environmental responsibility."³¹

Kerry supports mining regulations, which were rescinded by the Bush administration, to give the Bureau of Land Management the authority to reject a mine proposal if it would unnecessarily damage the environment.³² In 1999, he co-sponsored an amendment to the Interior appropriations bill that would have prevented mining companies from dumping unlimited amounts of toxic waste on public lands.³³ He has also voted against an amendment that would have allowed mountaintop removal mining practices to continue unabated.³⁴

National Parks

Kerry has pledged to protect parks from snowmobile, jet ski and off-road vehicle use and to boost funding for the National Park System. "While funding to address the maintenance [backlog] should remain a priority," he says, "I believe those budget needs must be balanced with additional resources for the operating budget in order to enhance resource protection and visitor education."³⁵

► ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT AND REGULATORY REFORM

Kerry was the first senator to oppose publicly the nomination of Gale Norton as secretary of the Interior.³⁶ He also voted against the nomination of John D. Graham to be administrator of the Office of Management and Budget's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. Consumer advocates and environmentalists have criticized Graham for imposing cost-benefit regulatory analysis that tends to undervalue costs to the environment.³⁷

On budgetary issues, Kerry has vowed to increase funding for environmental enforcement,³⁸ and has stated that it is "unacceptable that the portion of the federal budget going to environmental priorities has decreased even as use of our environmental amenities has skyrocketed and many of our pollution problems remain."³⁹ Kerry supports elevating EPA to a Cabinet agency, with the caveat that he would reject "any legislation that would seek to change or water down EPA's mission in return for giving the agency the Cabinet status that it deserves."⁴⁰

In 1995, Senator Kerry was one of the leaders in the floor fight against a so-called "regulatory reform" bill that was one of the cornerstones of the Republican's Contract With America. The bill would have undercut existing environmental safeguards such as the Toxics Release Inventory and made it more difficult to write the regulations for carrying out many health and environmental protection laws.⁴¹ Speaking on the floor against the bill, Kerry argued:

This bill has far-reaching implications for the health and safety and well-being of the United States of America. This bill should not become a grab bag, a greed effort by a lot of people who never wanted the EPA, who never wanted the Clean Air Act, never wanted the Clean Water Act, never wanted the Safe Drinking Water Act, never wanted the national parks program, never wanted any of these efforts in the first place. And we should not allow them under the guise of regulatory reform to undo 25 years of progress and effort.⁴²

In May 2000, Kerry signed the "Hyde Park Declaration" sponsored by the centrist Democratic Leadership Council. Billed as "A Statement of Principles and a Policy Agenda for the 21st Century," the declaration called for replacing "the old strategy of centralized, command-and-control regulation" with "more effective, efficient, and flexible ways of achieving" environmental goals "without relaxing our determination to

maintain and enforce mandatory national standards for environmental quality.” The declaration favored shifting environmental decision-making from Washington to communities.⁴³

► ENERGY

Nuclear Issues

Kerry has consistently voted against approving a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada—a site opposed by environmentalists due to its potential impact on the surrounding community and the danger posed by nuclear waste shipments to this single site.⁴⁴ He maintains “the federal government should commit to providing the necessary resources to clean up [nuclear waste] sites in a way that is protective of human health and the environment.” He also opposes subsidies that would allow the commercial nuclear industry to build new reactors.⁴⁵

Fuel Economy/Energy Efficiency

Senator Kerry has long been a vocal proponent of increasing the fuel economy of passenger cars and trucks in an effort to decrease our dependence on oil. In an amendment to the 2002 energy bill, Kerry and Senator John McCain (R-AZ) proposed increasing fuel efficiency standards from 24 miles per gallon to 36 miles per gallon by 2015. The measure, strongly opposed by President Bush and the automotive industry and ultimately unsuccessful, would have reduced oil use by more than 2 million barrels a day by 2015.⁴⁶ Speaking at LCV’s 2003 presidential environmental debate, he said: “We have the technology. We have the capacity. We have the will. We have the commitment. We have the entrepreneurial skill to be able to develop the means of driving better cars, without reducing their capacity to carry the soccer mom to the field, without reducing the capacity of people on farms to be able to do what they do.”⁴⁷

In addition, Kerry supported a 30 percent increase in minimum efficiency standards for central air conditioners and pumps.⁴⁸ He also supported an Energy Department award program to recognize firms that significantly improve their energy efficiency.⁴⁹

Oil Drilling

Calling the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge “a national treasure,” Kerry has been a key player in the Senate against Republican attempts to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling.⁵⁰ He has voted repeatedly to block drilling in the refuge and is a co-sponsor of the bill to protect a portion of the refuge as wilderness.⁵¹

He has also fought efforts to drill in sensitive areas in Georges Bank and off the Florida and California coasts, supporting a continued moratorium on oil and gas drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf, off the coast of New England and other parts of the country.⁵² At LCV’s presidential environmental debate, he argued that his energy proposals would eliminate the need for offshore drilling:

If we create the energy that I’m talking about from, number one, the raising of the fuel standards, save million barrels of oil a day, completely obviate what we take from the Middle East. Number two, create the energy institute/hydrogen institute, push for the creation of the new energy sources. Number three, ethanol and biomass and alternatives, we can reduce our dependency so we don’t need to drill offshore because we are moving and transitioning to the next wave of our energy source for this country.⁵³

Renewable Energy

As senator, Kerry has supported measures to boost funding for hydrogen fuel cell research and to give consumers incentives to purchase alternative-fuel vehicles.⁵⁴ His legislative record includes votes against defunding renewable energy programs⁵⁵ and for requiring ethanol in gasoline⁵⁶. Speaking at the 2003 LCV presidential environmental debate, he said, “We need leadership that is going to say that by the year 2020, 20 percent of America’s electricity is going to be produced from alternatives and renewables. We’re going to raise the emissions standards of our cars, just like you all had the courage to do out here in California. And we are going to set this country on the path to energy independence. We’re going to create the jobs of the future in doing so, and we don’t have to sacrifice one iota of quality of life to do that.”⁵⁷

► GLOBAL WARMING

Senator Kerry participated in the U.N. negotiations to create the Framework Convention on Climate Change at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio and served in the congressional delegation to the 1997 Kyoto and 2000 Hague climate talks.⁵⁸ Not surprisingly, he has been critical of the Bush administration for its inaction on global warming.⁵⁹ In 2001, he introduced legislation to “speed national action to address global climate change.” Kerry also successfully attached an amendment to the 2001 Bush budget package to “reduce greenhouse gas emissions, address global climate change concerns, protect the global environment, promote domestic energy security and to provide

increased funding for voluntary programs that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”⁶⁰ Responding to LCV’s environmental questionnaire, he said, “As president, I would re-engage with the international community to craft a global, binding treaty to cut pollution and take us beyond Kyoto to protect the global environment.”⁶¹

► WILDLIFE

The chairman or ranking member of the Senate Oceans and Fisheries subcommittee for more than a decade, Kerry authored the Marine Mammal Protection Act Amendments of 1994, later signed into law by President Clinton. He also authored legislation to ban the use of drift nets that threaten dolphins and other marine mammals,⁶² and he fought to pass the Sustainable Fisheries Act, which he credits with helping to rebuild fisheries in New England and elsewhere.⁶³

While acknowledging some flaws in the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Kerry says, “Instead of tearing down the law, I would improve it with a national commission to examine its implementation and ways to enhance it. I would increase funding to protect habitat and work with landowners. I would ensure that federal agencies fully comply with the requirements of the ESA and other environmental laws. And I would encourage cooperative efforts to resolve conflicts between development and endangered species conservation.” He opposes exempting the Defense Department from the ESA.⁶⁴ In 1995, Kerry opposed legislation to eliminate funding for listing new types of endangered species and in 1996 voted against a proposed moratorium on the endangered species list.⁶⁵

► INTERNATIONAL

In his LCV questionnaire, Kerry stated his strong support for an international approach to environmental issues: “I believe the US should re-engage and play a leadership role in fashioning multi-lateral accords on climate change and other environmental issues.”⁶⁶ In the early 1990s, Kerry sponsored a bill that would have placed a permanent ban on mining in Antarctica and was able to get it passed by the Foreign Affairs Committee—even persuading former Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) to support the bill. As the bill was about to go to the Senate floor for a vote, the administration, which had previously been opposed to a mining ban, agreed to a 50-year ban on mining. This compromise is now law.⁶⁷

Population

Kerry supports increased funding for international and domestic family planning programs, and has voted in favor of funding.⁶⁸

Trade

In 2002, Kerry sponsored important, although ultimately unsuccessful, legislation that would have prevented trade agreements from undermining environmental and public health protections.⁶⁹ In his campaign documents, he has vowed to “negotiate agreements that grow the economy and create jobs but do not open a backdoor attack on our environmental standards.”⁷⁰

► RECORD ON STATE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

In 1970, Kerry helped organize and spoke at the first Earth Day in Massachusetts, and twenty years later, he chaired Earth Day New England. To demonstrate his commitment to environmental justice, Kerry made a point of spending the most recent Earth Day in Roxbury, Massachusetts. As Massachusetts’ lieutenant governor, he helped organize a concerted response to the problem of acid rain and has continued his leadership on air pollution issues that affect his state in the Senate.⁷¹

ENDNOTES

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