

DENNIS KUCINICH



BIOGRAPHY

Dennis Kucinich was born October 10, 1946 in Cleveland, Ohio. His political career began on the Cleveland City Council, where he served from 1969 to 1973 while earning bachelor's and master's degrees from Case Western Reserve University. After a stint as Cleveland's clerk of courts in 1975, he was elected Cleveland's mayor in 1977 but defeated for re-election in 1979 after he refused to sell city-owned properties, including the Muni Light electric utility, to meet the city's financial obligations. His later career embraced both public service—two years in the Ohio Senate—and the private sector, where he acted as consultant to Publicly Owned Electric Systems, taught communications and political science at Case Western Reserve and Cleveland State, and helmed a marketing and communications firm. In 1996, after four failed bids (one as an Independent), Kucinich was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he has served ever since. He currently sits on the Education and Workforce and Government Reform committees. He is the co-chair of the House Progressive Caucus. Divorced, he has one child.

OVERVIEW

One of the House's most outspoken progressives, Representative Kucinich has been a reliable pro-environment vote on many key issues, including clean air and clean water, drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and public lands protection. His uncompromising passion has been put to good use in such fights as opposing rollbacks of the Clean Air Act and the expansion of nuclear power. Kucinich's relatively short tenure in the House of Representatives and lack of environmental committee assignments have limited his ability to be an environmental leader, but he has nevertheless compiled one of the best environmental voting records in the House.

ISSUE AREAS

Dennis Kucinich's campaign returned LCV's presidential questionnaire; excerpts from his questionnaire are included throughout this profile. Due to his relatively short tenure in the house of Representatives, we have included as many of Kucinich's recent votes and legislative efforts as possible in order to illustrate his stance on key issues.

► CLEAN AIR

Representative Kucinich has a solid voting record in support of clean air legislation. In 2000, he voted against an attempt to block the Environmental Protection Agency from implementing new rules for smog that would protect people with asthma and other respiratory problems

| Dennis Kucinich | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----------|
| Lifetime Environmental Voting Record | | | | | | | |
| (1997–2003) | | | | | | | |
| Year | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | Lifetime |
| LCV Score | 81 | 92 | 88 | 93 | 93 | 100 | 90 |

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.

in communities across the country.¹ In 1997, he opposed a bill that would have weakened the Clean Air Act by preventing the EPA from going forward with tighter restrictions on smog-causing pollutants.² To reduce air

THE CANDIDATE IN HIS OWN WORDS

Near the end of her wonderful book of essays, *Small Wonder*, author Barbara Kingsolver quotes Emma Goldman from 1903, a century ago: “Out of the chaos the future emerges in harmony and beauty.”

That is the destiny of our environmental movement. That is the potential of a Kucinich Administration. That is the duty of those of us who care about our Mother Earth, at a time when it is under attack. To bring a future of harmony and beauty out of today’s chaos.

Environmental harmony will not come from an Administration which seeks war as its first response, which values oil too highly, which trusts corporations too much, which believes that the way to make society work better is to give the rich even more wealth.

What the Dennis Kucinich campaign offers is a direct challenge to the Bush Administration. On war and peace issues; on fair trade and corporate power issues; on education and environmental issues—a Kucinich Administration will offer a fundamental alternative to the current way of doing business.

Only Kucinich will cancel NAFTA on day one, fight against WTO, and launch a Global Green Deal. Only Kucinich will fight for 20% renewables by 2010. Only Kucinich will take on the Pentagon budget to provide money for domestic priorities, including environmental cleanup, urban parks, and environmental justice. Only Kucinich led the fight against the war with Iraq from the beginning, and kept on fighting, every single day, including today.

With Dennis Kucinich, you get that rare combination—a working class kid with the deep understanding that everything is interconnected, that we are, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., taught us, “...tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.” Dennis Kucinich does believe that a better world is possible.

— Dennis Kucinich, responding to the League of Conservation Voters presidential questionnaire

pollution, he favors a combination of encouraging alternative fuels and mass transit, requiring cleaner cars, and ending subsidies to coal power plants.³

Kucinich supports reducing air pollution from power plants and is a co-sponsor of a bill that would require that coal-burning power plants reduce their emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, mercury and carbon dioxide.⁴ He pledges that “a Kucinich administration will aggressively push Congress for a comprehensive four pollutant law that will quickly provide cleaner air to the metropolitan areas.”⁵ And although Ohio has a number of older, coal-burning power plants, Kucinich has steadfastly opposed proposals to weaken the Clean Air Act for their benefit. “At a time when we are starting to see sharp increases in respiratory problems, particularly asthma, in urban areas,” he noted, “it is going in the wrong direction to give these older plants more leeway.”⁶

► CLEAN WATER

If elected president, Kucinich promises to reassert the Clean Water Act’s authority over “all waters of the United States,” including intermittent streams and “isolated” wetlands that would be denied Clean Water Act protection under a Bush administration proposal.⁷ He has co-sponsored legislation that would reaffirm the authority of the Clean Water Act.⁸ He vows to clamp down on polluters and to “make a major WPA-style investment in water infrastructure improvements to protect the public health and put people back to work.” In addition, he supports “major reform” of the Army Corps of Engineers, one of the federal agencies that issues permits to develop wetlands, in order “to ensure compliance with our environmental principles.”⁹

As a member of Congress, Kucinich has voted to prevent the Bush administration from rolling back a

regulation to reduce arsenic levels in drinking water and was a co-sponsor of a bill that would have required the administration to adopt the more protective arsenic standards.¹⁰ He also voted to allow the EPA to go forward with plans to clean up toxics in waterways.¹¹

► TOXICS

Kucinich favors giving EPA more resources to clean up brownfields. In addition, he supports requiring manufacturers to disclose chemicals' potential health impacts and phasing out chemicals with known links to serious health effects.¹²

Superfund

Kucinich voted against a bill exempting "small" businesses from Superfund cleanup liability that was opposed by environmental community in part because a "small" business under the bill could have as many as 100 employees and up to \$3 million in annual revenues.¹³ He supports reinstating the "polluter pays" tax on businesses that pays for Superfund cleanups, and he argues for funding the program at "a much higher level."¹⁴

► PUBLIC LANDS

Representative Kucinich has a good record of support for public lands. In 1998, he voted to increase funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund¹⁵ but opposed an effort to provide \$30 million to the fund's state-side program, which provides matching funds to states to create outdoor recreation resources.¹⁶ In response to LCV's presidential questionnaire, he said he supports full funding for both the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Conservation Trust Fund.¹⁷

Kucinich has cosponsored bills to designate the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as wilderness and to designate federal lands in Utah as wilderness.¹⁸ He would reverse the Bush administration's recent policy decision to limit wilderness designations on federal public lands.¹⁹

National Forests

Kucinich voted to prohibit the use of funds for road construction in Alaska's Tongass National Forest.²⁰ He is a long-time supporter of protection for roadless areas of national forests, voting for legislation to protect roadless areas in 1998, and he is currently co-sponsoring a bill that would reaffirm the Clinton administration's roadless rule.²¹ In 2003 Kucinich voted against two pieces of legislation to imple-

ment President Bush's Healthy Forests initiative.²² If elected president, Kucinich vows to place a permanent moratorium on commercial logging and new road construction on federal public lands. To help prevent forest fires, he would focus on providing homeowners with fire-prevention assistance.²³

Mining

Kucinich supports a radical overhaul of the 1872 Mining Law that governs mineral extraction from federal public lands. He believes the current system of charging royalties for oil, gas and coal drilling is already "too favorable to the corporations who benefit from taxpayer land" and would support charging a higher royalty rate to all mining companies—including hardrock mining companies, who currently pay no royalties at all.²⁴ Representative Kucinich has voted to require that mining companies operating on federal lands clean up toxic waste and to limit the amount of waste that mining companies may dump on public lands.²⁵ He is also a co-sponsor of legislation making clear that destructive "mountaintop removal" coal mining violates the Clean Water Act.²⁶

National Parks

Kucinich favors limiting the use of snowmobiles, jet skis, and off-road vehicles in parks and has co-sponsored a bill to ban snowmobile use in Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks.²⁷ He argues that "we must protect our parks by blocking any activities that further erode these limited resources."²⁸

► ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT AND REGULATORY REFORM

Kucinich opposed final passage of a 2000 appropriations bill that slashed EPA funding by more than half.²⁹ In 2001, he voted to provide EPA with more funds to enforce environmental laws.³⁰ As a candidate, he proposes cutting defense spending by "billions of dollars" to free up money for natural resources and environmental programs.³¹

Kucinich voted against the so-called "regulatory reform" proposals that were put forward by the Republicans "Contract With America"—proposals that would have weakened environmental and public health protections under the guise of streamlining regulations and reducing paperwork.³² In his presidential questionnaire, Kucinich states that health standards should never be based on cost to industry: "Corporate profits do not belong in any formula that determines a child's health."³³

Kucinich is the leading congressional opponent of genetically modified organisms in food. He is currently the sponsor of six bills on this issue, and in 2001, he sponsored an amendment that would have prevented the Food and Drug Administration from approving an application for an animal drug to create genetically engineered fish.³⁴

He endorses the idea of making EPA a Cabinet-level agency with the proviso that any such change “should only strengthen [EPA’s] mandate to protect our environment.”³⁵ And he argues for making the National Environmental Policy Act a more powerful tool by encouraging “maximum public participation” and by expanding the law “to require a detailed federal response to any environmental impacts.”³⁶

► ENERGY

Kucinich signed on to a Progressive Caucus position paper that advocates setting cost-based rates for wholesale electricity, natural gas, and heating oil to shield consumers from escalating energy prices.³⁷

Nuclear Issues

Kucinich has been a vocal critic of the proposed nuclear waste disposal site under Yucca Mountain in Nevada.³⁸ Yucca Mountain is opposed by environmentalists due to its potential impact on the surrounding community and the danger posed by nuclear waste shipments to this single site. In addition, Kucinich has consistently worked to block the expansion of the commercial nuclear industry. In his words, nuclear power “poses an unnecessary risk to the public and highly toxic nuclear waste remains a major unresolved disposal challenge.” He favors replacing nuclear power with “more sustainable technologies.”³⁹

Fuel Economy/Energy Efficiency

In 2001, Kucinich voted to raise fuel efficiency standards for passenger cars and light trucks—including SUVs—to 26 miles per gallon in 2005 and to 27.5 miles per gallon in 2007. In 2003, he voted for an amendment requiring a 5 percent decrease in the amount of gas consumed by cars and light trucks by 2010.⁴⁰ He now argues that we can achieve a fuel economy standard of 40 miles per gallon. Kucinich is a strong supporter of increased funding for mass transit.⁴¹

Oil Drilling

Kucinich has consistently voted against drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge,⁴² and has co-spon-

sored legislation to preserve the refuge from drilling by designating parts of it as wilderness.⁴³ He is also opposed to offshore drilling, saying, “Coastal states should not have to depend on electing the President’s brother to receive protection from offshore drilling.”⁴⁴ He has voted against drilling off the coasts of Florida and California and in the Great Lakes.⁴⁵

Renewable Energy

Kucinich favors “continued commercialization of hybrid and fuel cell cars.” While he supports a 20 percent renewable electricity standard, he believes that goal can be achieved a full 10 years earlier than 2020. “Beyond then,” he argues, “we should strive for the day when half our energy is renewable. Wind energy in Iowa, solar energy in New Mexico, tidal energy along our coasts—these renewable technologies already exist. We should push forward with a Global Green Deal, in the tradition of Franklin Delano Roosevelt—a renewable energies investment program that puts Americans to work, builds up our renewable industries, and transfers ‘small is beautiful’ technologies to the developing world.”⁴⁶

► GLOBAL WARMING

A staunch supporter of the Kyoto Protocol on Global Warming, Kucinich supported legislation to implement those portions of the treaty that are already allowed under law without waiting for the treaty to be ratified.⁴⁷ As president, he pledges to “set the U.S. on a path towards leading the world to less greenhouse gas emissions, rather than dragging our feet.”⁴⁸

► WILDLIFE

While supporting the goals of the Endangered Species Act, Kucinich believes the government needs to be “aggressive in designating more critical habitats.”⁴⁹ He voted against waiving the Endangered Species Act for flood control projects.⁵⁰ He opposes giving the Defense Department ESA exemptions.⁵¹

► INTERNATIONAL

In his response to LCV’s presidential questionnaire, Kucinich asks: “If the most wealthy and industrialized nation will not take responsibility for protecting our planet, how can we expect the rest of the world to succeed?”⁵²

Population

In the past, Representative Kucinich has consistently voted in support of the “Mexico City” rule that would deny U.S. funding to organizations that provide family planning services if those groups use funding from other sources to perform abortions.⁵³ LCV and other environmental groups oppose the Mexico City policy and this issue has been included in LCV’s National Environmental Scorecard numerous times.⁵⁴ However, Kucinich has recently announced a change of heart on the issue and in a recent vote, he supported releasing U.S. funding to the United Nations Population Fund.⁵⁵

Trade

Kucinich has been a vocal opponent of free trade agreements and the World Trade Organization, and he was an active participant in the protests surrounding the WTO meeting in Seattle in 2000.⁵⁶ “As President,” Kucinich says, “my first action will be to withdraw the United States from NAFTA and the WTO. This single act will eliminate the threat to our public health and environmental laws posed by NAFTA’s Chapter 11. It will also relieve the pressure on legislators and law enforcement/regulatory officials posed by the threat of WTO sanctions. The United States is the largest consumer market in the world. I would use that fact to leverage the protection of public health and environmental standards in the United States and their elevation around the world...When I am President, there will be no so-called ‘side agreements’ on labor and the environment—if labor and environment are not in the heart of any trade agreement, there will be no agreements.”⁵⁷

Kucinich also favors rescinding “fast track” trading authority in favor of “an open rule” that would allow Congress to “debate all germane amendments to trade legislation.”⁵⁸

► RECORD ON STATE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

As a state senator, Kucinich battled with then-Governor George Voinovich over his plans to site a low-level nuclear waste repository in Ohio.⁵⁹ In Congress, Kucinich has continued to highlight nuclear issues in the state, introducing an amendment to revoke the license of the Davis Besse nuclear power plant in Ohio, located less than 100 miles from the edge of Kucinich’s congressional district. He later withdrew the amendment, saying he had introduced it to raise awareness of safety problems at the plant.⁶⁰ He has worked against a plan to increase train traffic in his district.⁶¹ He and his staff were very involved in the battle to prevent drilling in Lake Erie and helped to push through a moratorium

on drilling in the Great Lakes.⁶² Environmentalists in his state note Kucinich’s strong commitment to environmental issues, particularly nuclear issues, trade and the safety of genetically modified foods, and his commitment to grassroots politics and constituent service. They also note that he is the only Ohio congressman who has publicly voiced his opposition to the President’s weak “Clear Skies” proposal for cleaning up power plant pollution.⁶³

ENDNOTES

- ¹ 106th Congress, H.R. 4635, House vote 305, 21 June 2000
- ² 105th Congress, H.R. 1984, 9 October 1997
- ³ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ⁴ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003; 108th Congress, H.R. 2042, 8 May 2003
- ⁵ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ⁶ Steven Koff and Tom Diemer, “A Bitter Debate Looms Over How to Regulate Power Plant Emissions,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 18 August 2001
- ⁷ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ⁸ 108th Congress, H.R. 962, 27 February 2003
- ⁹ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ¹⁰ 107th Congress, H.R. 2620, House vote 288, 27 July 2001; 107th Congress, H.R. 1413, 4 April 2001
- ¹¹ 106th Congress, H.R. 4635, House vote 304, 21 June 2000
- ¹² League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ¹³ 106th Congress, H.R. 5175, House vote 494, 26 September 2000
- ¹⁴ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ¹⁵ 106th Congress, H.R. 701, House vote 179, 11 May 2000
- ¹⁶ 105th Congress, H.R. 4193, House vote 315, 21 July 1998
- ¹⁷ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ¹⁸ 108th Congress, H.R. 770, 13 February 2003; 108th Congress, H.R. 1796, 11 April 2003
- ¹⁹ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ²⁰ 105th Congress, H.R. 4193, House Vote 320, 23 July 1998
- ²¹ 105th Congress, H.R. 2515, House vote 79, 27 March 1998; 108th Congress, H.R. 2691, House vote 386, 17 July 2003; 108th Congress, H.R. 2369, 5 June 2003
- ²² 108th Congress, H.R. 1904, House vote 198, 20 May 1995; 108th Congress, H.R. 1904, House vote 200, 20 May 2003.

- ²³ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ²⁴ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ²⁵ 106th Congress, H.R. 2466, House vote 288, 14 July 1999; 107th Congress, H.R. 2217, House vote 182, 21 June 2001
- ²⁶ 108th Congress, H.R. 738, 12 February 2003
- ²⁷ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003; 108th Congress, H.R. 1130, 6 March 2003; 108th Congress, H.R. 2691, House vote 385, 17 July 2003
- ²⁸ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ²⁹ 106th Congress, H.R. 2684, House vote 403, 9 September 1999
- ³⁰ 107th Congress, H.R. 2620, House vote 289, 27 July 2001
- ³¹ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ³² 104th Congress, H.R. 1022, House vote 183, 28 February 1995; 104th Congress, H.R. 9, House vote 199, 3 March 1995
- ³³ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ³⁴ 108th Congress, H.R. 2916, 2917, 2918, 2919, 2920 & 2921, 25 July 2003; 107th Congress, H.R. 2330, House vote 218, 11 July 2001
- ³⁵ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ³⁶ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ³⁷ Progressive Caucus' Consumer Energy Rate Relief Act 01-CPC1, 16 March 2002
- ³⁸ 106th Congress, S. 1287, House Vote 63, 22 March 2000; 105th Congress, H.R. 1270, House Vote 557, 30 October 1997
- ³⁹ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ⁴⁰ 107th Congress, H.R. 4, House vote 311, 1 August 2001, 108th Congress, H.R. 6, House vote 132, 10 April 2003
- ⁴¹ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ⁴² 108th Congress, H.R. 6, House vote 135, 10 April 2003; 107th Congress, H.R. 4, House vote 317, 1 August 2001
- ⁴³ 107th Congress, H.R. 770, 28 February 2001
- ⁴⁴ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ⁴⁵ 107th Congress, H.R. 5093, House Vote 315, 17 July 2002; 106th Congress, H.R. 2217, House Vote 181, 21 June 2001; 106th Congress, H.R. 2311, House Vote 203, 28 June 2001
- ⁴⁶ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ⁴⁷ 106th Congress, H.R. 4690, House Vote 323, 26 June 2000
- ⁴⁸ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ⁴⁹ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ⁵⁰ 105th Congress, H.R. 478, House vote 108, 7 May 1997
- ⁵¹ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003; 107th Congress, H.R. 4546, House vote 136, 9 May 2002; 108th Congress H.R. 1588, House vote 202, 21 May 2003
- ⁵² League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ⁵³ 107th Congress, H.R. 1646, House vote 115, 16 May 2001; 106th Congress, H.R. 4811, House vote 396, 13 July 2000
- ⁵⁴ See, for example, 2001 National Environmental Scorecard
- ⁵⁵ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003; 108th Congress, H.R. 1950, House vote 362, 15 July 2003
- ⁵⁶ Bob Young, "Kucinich Brings Liberal, Spiritual, Long-Shot Presidential Bid to Town," *Seattle Times*, 20 July 2003
- ⁵⁷ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ⁵⁸ League of Conservation Voters Presidential Questionnaire, 4 August 2003
- ⁵⁹ Robert Weissman, "Mr. K. Challenges the World; Dennis Kucinich, Democratic Representative From Ohio," *The Nation*, 7 April 1997
- ⁶⁰ John Fun, "David-Besse Can Keep its License," *Plain Dealer*, 7 June 2003
- ⁶¹ V. David Sartin, "Businesses Worry Trains Will Shut Them," *Plain Dealer*, 16 November 1998.
- ⁶² John C. Kuehner, "Drilling For Gas In Lake Risky, Group Says Report Cites Problems In Canadian Accidents," *Plain Dealer*, 3 February 2002
- ⁶³ Interview with Vicki Deisner & Jack Shaner, Ohio Environmental Council, 1 August 2003; Interview with Bryan Clark, Ohio Sierra Club, 1 August 2003