

The Grand Canyon



PROGRAM REPORT

Preparing for the 2020 election



Letter from the director

As detailed in this report, we've spent a lot of time preparing for this year's elections.

But it would be disingenuous to say that's because the 2020 election is the most important of your lifetime.

At least five of the last six national elections have been labelled “the biggest ever” by one major bloc of voters or another.

Yet the one cycle—2013–2014—about which folks didn't get so riled up was of enormous consequence. Eight pro-environment U.S. senators were replaced by candidates who have since earned failing grades on our Congressional Scorecard. Imagine if the greener candidates had won just half of those races and there had been a pro-environment majority in the Senate for the past five years.

I don't mention this to downplay the enormous consequences of this year's vote, especially for president.

I do so to illustrate three of Environment America Voter Action's basic missions, ones that set us apart from many other electoral groups, and ones that your ongoing support make it possible to carry out.

We're in it for the long run. Every election matters a lot. You can use the “tortoise vs. the hare” analogy or the “change is a marathon, not a sprint” one. But the key thing we're keeping in mind is that, even with the best imaginable results on Nov. 3, the far-reaching, comprehensive changes needed to protect our environment aren't going to be passed—especially at the national level—soon thereafter. In many ways, our efforts in 2020 will be aimed at influencing who is president, Environmental Protection Agency administrator, Senate majority leader, governor and so on in 2028, when—if we do our job well—the political climate will make the passage and implementation of those measures possible.

Electoral work is part of our ongoing advocacy efforts. No matter what happens on Nov. 3, laws and regulations will still be passed, repealed or blocked by human beings, subject to persuasion by all sides. Contributions to those politicians—or, for regulators, their bosses—can make a difference in their ability to win elections.

Much of the real action takes place outside Washington, D.C. Thinking globally but initially acting locally has resulted in most of our country's most effective environmental protections. So, most of our contributions—even those made to candidates running for federal office—are made with the intention of affecting what's going on at the state and local levels.

Of course, it would be great if 2020's election resulted in a Green Wave. But, thanks to your support, we will keep our eyes on the big picture, building a long-lasting, widespread Green Tide.

David Masur
Campaign Director

P.S. Our work to defend the environment can't stop and won't stop in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. We'll keep advocating on your behalf—at a safe social distance—for clean air, clean water, clean energy, wildlife and open spaces, and a livable climate.

Selecting our candidates for 2020

There are thousands of great pro-environment candidates running for federal, state and local offices in 2020—and thousands who are not so keen on the subject, if not outright hostile.

Environment America Voter Action would love to contribute to all of the former, and to the opponents of all of the latter. But we've learned from experience that your donations are best spent via larger amounts of money supporting a smaller set of candidates.

So, what are the criteria we use to determine which candidates to support?

The answer is that, at a minimum, they have to fit into one or more of our three “Candidate Categories.” Here's a quick description of those categories, along with profiles of some of the exemplar candidates to which we've already contributed.

Green Champions

Given their value for influencing public opinion and overcoming procedural roadblocks, there are far too few prominent elected officials who make the environment their top issue priority. Even fewer are those who grasp the need to put behind us the old-fashioned obsession with material growth, which is the root of many of our worst environmental problems.

One of our aims is to dramatically increase the number of officeholders who highly prioritize bold environmental reforms in their rhetoric, and in the way they spend their time. We not only want to help them win their own elections, but also to help them support an ever-increasing circle of like-minded candidates and the network needed to win long-term, lasting changes.



*Sen. Edward Markey
(Massachusetts)*

Sen. Markey is the longtime leading congressional advocate for cutting-edge renewable energy and climate change legislation.



*Rep. Xochitl Torres Small
(New Mexico-02)*

Long before Rep. Torres Small narrowly won an upset victory in her rural-suburban district in 2018, she was a clean water and public lands activist in New Mexico.



Gov. Jay Inslee (Washington)

Gov. Inslee has authored many of the most comprehensive, practical federal proposals for tackling climate change, while helping pass cutting-edge renewable energy laws in his home state.



*State Rep. Danielle Friel Otten
(Pennsylvania-155)*

After organizing citizen opposition to a gas pipeline proposed to run through her neighborhood, Otten has quickly become a leader on renewable energy and other environmental issues in Pennsylvania's Legislature.

Green Majority

As has been illustrated over and over during the past several decades, it's hard to make anything good happen, or prevent anything bad, in a legislature if the leaders controlling the agenda aren't sympathetic to your cause. And there's nothing else like helping their party's candidates win a majority of seats when it comes to earning that sympathy.

So, in swing U.S. House and Senate seats that are key to winning a green majority, we support candidates with strong pro-environment records, especially compared to their opponents. They are running in districts and states where the previous margin was 10 percent or less, although—as we saw in 2018—there will be some cases in which we support great candidates with a shot at overcoming even larger margins.



*Rep. Elissa Slotkin
(Michigan-08)*

A leader in the effort to increase conservation funding, Rep. Slotkin got 50.6 percent of the vote to defeat an incumbent in 2018 in her Lansing-Detroit suburbs district.



*Senate candidate Mark Kelly
(Arizona)*

Inspired by seeing the planet change while he was in space for a year, Kelly is a former astronaut and U.S. Navy captain aiming to unseat Sen. Martha McSally, who has accrued a long list of anti-environmental votes.



*Rep. Kim Schrier
(Washington-08)*

Rep. Schrier flipped her suburban Seattle district with 52 percent of the vote, while declaring that “combating climate change is the greatest issue of our time.”



*Rep. Elaine Luria
(Virginia-02)*

Another Navy veteran, Rep. Luria won election with 51.1 percent of the vote in her district along Virginia's Atlantic coast, where she emphasized her opposition to offshore oil drilling.

Problem Solvers

It takes more than leadership and control of the agenda to create and pass laws and rules that will make a real, long-lasting difference. Success also requires attention to the nitty-gritty details of bills and regulations, so that they have a chance of being accepted and implemented well. And no single party or ideology has a monopoly on such wisdom.

That's why we back candidates from both major parties who create and support practical and winnable environmental measures, and seek compromise, not "us vs. them" politics. Many of them are from so-called "red" and "purple" states.



Sen. Doug Jones (Alabama)

Since his upset win as a Democrat in the heavily Republican Alabama, Sen. Jones has served as a line of communication with Republican colleagues willing to support renewable energy and modest climate change proposals.



Rep. Sharice Davids (Kansas-03)

Being a former mixed martial arts fighter, an attorney and a Native American from rural Nebraska gives Rep. Davids entrée into a wider variety of discussions than the average pro-environment member of Congress. She's used those connections to promote the development of renewable energy.



Rep. Andy Kim (New Jersey-03)

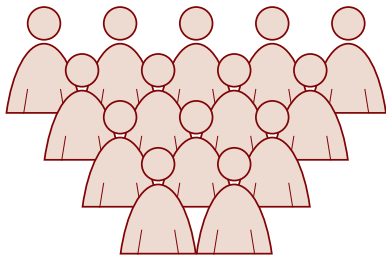
Tapping his foreign service experience, the new representative of a district still recovering from Hurricane Sandy has described climate change as a top "national security" issue. That has helped Rep. Kim to connect with and motivate colleagues who haven't typically prioritized the environment.



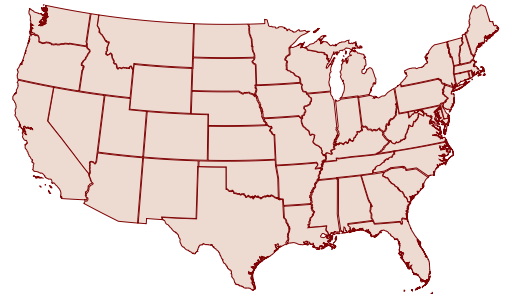
Sen. Chris Coons (Delaware)

Sen. Coons is the co-founder of the bipartisan Senate Climate Solutions Caucus. The caucus's mission is to develop measures to deal with climate change with broad enough support to pass the Senate, which has long been the burying ground for pro-environment legislation.

Donations *by the numbers*



5,721
individual donors from
46 states and
Washington, D.C.



representing more than

1,000
different occupations,
including



teachers



nurses



engineers



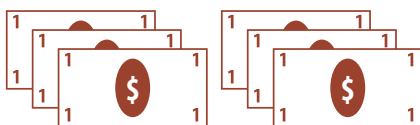
beekeeper



blacksmith

with an average
contribution of

\$26.78



gave
more than

\$369,443,

blowing away the
original goal of
\$300,000.

Environment America Voter Action donors

Citizen support is the cornerstone of Environment America Voter Action. Thousands of Americans supported Environment America and its state organizations' connected political action committee, Environment America Voter Action, by making contributions in 2019. The members listed below were particularly supportive. Names that appear in italics denote monthly supporters.

\$1,000 or More

The following members of Environment America and its state groups contributed \$1,000 or more to Environment America Voter Action.

Mateus Ciancio • Shannon Williams

\$500 to \$999

The following members of Environment America and its state groups contributed between \$500 and \$999 to Environment America Voter Action.

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The following members of Environment America and its state groups contributed between \$250 and \$499 to Environment America Voter Action.

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Environment America Voter Action is your voice in our national, state and local elections. We make sure people like you are heard—members of Environment America and its 29 state environmental group affiliates who care about putting the environment first. Below is a partial list of the staff who help us carry out this vital mission.



David Masur
Campaign Director and
PennEnvironment Executive
Director



Douglas Phelps
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Network; Chairman, Board of
Directors, Environment America



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