



John McCain: Bad for America's water

Summary

Americans deserve clean water. But Sen. John McCain has too often taken the side of polluters in opposing stronger protections for our water. Sen. McCain:

- Voted against the public's right to know¹ about the 224 million pounds of toxic pollution dumped annually into our waterways.²
- Voted to exempt the oil and gas industry from Safe Drinking Water Act regulations.³
- Voted against stronger clean water rules for hardrock mining operations,⁴ which have already polluted 40 percent of all watersheds in the West.⁵
- Voted to push back tightening the standard for arsenic in drinking water,⁶ which would have exposed as many as 34 million Americans to increased risk of cancer.⁷
- Voted against consumers' right to know about contaminants in their drinking water.⁸
- Opposed making polluters pay for the cleanup of Superfund toxic waste sites—leaving taxpayers to pick up the tab.⁹

¹ S. Amdt. 1535, Vote #306, 7/13/95.

² U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *TRI Explorer: 2006 National Fact Sheet: United States*, downloaded from www.epa.gov/cgi-bin/broker?view=STCO&trilib=TRIQ1&state=All+states&SFS=YES&year=2006&_service=oiaa&program=xp_tri.sasmacr.tristart.macro, 7 October 2008.

³ YES vote on S. Amdt. 2986, Vote #43, 7 March 2002.

⁴ NO vote on whether S. Amdt. 3980 is germane, Vote #224, 20 July 2000.

⁵ Earthjustice, *Hardrock Mining Reform Is Long Overdue*, downloaded from http://www.earthjustice.org/our_work/policy/2007/page.jsp?itemID=30984990, 14 October 2008.

⁶ YES vote to table S. Amdt. 4308, Vote #270, 12 October 2000.

⁷ Natural Resources Defense Council, *Issues: Water: Arsenic in Drinking Water*, downloaded from www.nrdc.org/water/drinking/qarsenic.asp, 10 October 2008.

⁸ YES vote to table S. Amdt. 3078, Vote #587, 29 November 1995.

⁹ S. Amdt. 408, Vote #97, 3/25/03.

Who can protect America's water?

Americans depend on clean water for drinking, recreation, family and the preservation of healthy ecosystems for fish and wildlife.

America needs a president who understands the importance of clean water to the nation's economy and our environment and will take on the polluters. Unfortunately, during his time in the U.S. Senate, John McCain too often stood with the polluters as they worked to dismantle America's protections for clean water.

Four more years? The Bush administration's assault on clean water

Since passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, America has made great progress toward cleaning up our nation's waters. However, our rivers, lakes and streams are still in dire need of protection from industrial pollution, contaminated runoff, sewage overflows and a host of other threats.

Even today, 47 percent of America's assessed rivers and streams and 59 percent of our assessed lakes are too polluted for fishing, swimming or other uses.¹⁰ Polluters dumped more than 244 million pounds of toxic chemicals into American waterways in 2006.¹¹ And more than 850 billion gallons of raw or inadequately treated sewage are discharged into waterways each year.¹²

But under George Bush, America has taken a large step backward in the protection of our precious water supplies. Time and again, the Bush administration has pushed to roll back critical protections for clean water. President Bush:

- Moved to eliminate Clean Water Act protections for at least 59 percent of America's streams—waterways that are critical for a variety of wildlife and feed the drinking water supplies of more than 111 million people.¹³

¹⁰ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Watershed Assessment, Tracking and Environmental Results: National Summary of State Information*, downloaded from iaspub.epa.gov/waters10/attains_nation_cy.control, 7 October 2008.

¹¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *TRI Explorer: 2006 National Fact Sheet: United States*, downloaded from www.epa.gov/cgi-bin/broker?view=STCO&trilib=TRIO1&state=All+states&SFS=YES&year=2006&service=oiaa&progam=xp_tri.sasmacr.tristart.macro, 7 October 2008.

¹² U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Report to Congress on Impacts and Control of Combined Sewer Overflows and Sanitary Sewer Overflows: Fact Sheet*, downloaded from www.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/csosso_rtc_factsheet.pdf, 7 October 2008.

¹³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Table 1: State-by-State NHD Analysis of Stream Categories and Drinking Water Data*, undated.

- Curtailed enforcement of the Clean Water Act. For example, major facilities exceeded their permitted amounts of water pollution more than 24,000 times in 2005.¹⁴
- Curbed the public's right to know about toxic pollution of waterways by allowing polluters to conceal more information about their toxic discharges.¹⁵
- Put the interests of Big Oil ahead of the public by exempting the construction of oil and gas drilling sites from the Clean Water Act.¹⁶

Cleaning up America's waterways

Americans deserve clean water and a healthy environment. To get there, we need to take a few common-sense steps:

- Restore Clean Water Act protections to all U.S. waterways, including source water streams and wetlands.
- Enforce the Clean Water Act to make sure polluters are following the law, reduce discharges of toxic chemicals, sewage and other pollution into waterways, and make polluters pay to clean up the damage they have caused.
- Invest in repairing outdated sewer systems and measures to reduce runoff pollution.
- Defend and expand the public's right to know to know about the release of toxic pollution into our rivers, lakes and streams.

The 2008 election and clean water

Restoring America's waterways to health won't happen by itself. It will take strong leadership. The question facing Americans is whether the next president will stand up to the polluters and take strong action to protect our waterways.

Unfortunately, during his time in the U.S. Senate, John McCain has too often sided with the polluters to weaken protections for America's water—putting our environment and the health of the public at risk.

¹⁴ Christy Leavitt, U.S. PIRG Education Fund, *Troubled Waters: An Analysis of 2005 Clean Water Act Compliance*, October 2007.

¹⁵ "Toxics Release Inventory Burden Reduction Final Rule," *Federal Register* 71:246, 76932-76945, 22 December 2006.

¹⁶ "Amendments to the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Regulations for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Oil and Gas Exploration, Production, Processing, or Treatment Operations, or Transmission Facilities; Final Rule," *Federal Register*, 71: 33628-33640, 12 June 2006.

John McCain: No Friend of Clean Water

Time and again, John McCain has stood with the polluters to weaken protections for America's water. During his time in the Senate, John McCain:

- Voted against the public's right to know about the 224 million pounds of toxic pollution dumped annually into our waterways.¹⁷
- Voted to exempt the oil and gas industry from Safe Drinking Water Act regulations.¹⁸
- Voted against stronger clean water rules for hardrock mining operations,¹⁹ which have already polluted 40 percent of all watersheds in the West.²⁰
- Voted to push back tightening the standard for arsenic in drinking water,²¹ which would have exposed as many as 34 million Americans to increased risk of cancer.²²
- Voted against our right to know about contaminants in our drinking water.²³
- Opposed making polluters pay for the cleanup of Superfund toxic waste sites—leaving taxpayers to pick up the tab.²⁴

Barack Obama: A strong advocate for clean water

Americans have a choice this November. In Barack Obama, Americans have a champion who is willing to take on the polluters and fight to restore our waterways. Sen. Obama has committed to:

- Fully fund programs to replace and upgrade aging sewer systems that put the health of our waterways at risk.
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¹⁷ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *TRI Explorer: 2006 National Fact Sheet: United States*, downloaded from www.epa.gov/cgi-bin/broker?view=STCO&trilib=TRIQ1&state=All+states&SFS=YES&year=2006&_service=oiia&_program=xp_tri.sasmacr.tristart.macro, 7 October 2008.

¹⁸ YES vote on S. Amdt. 2986, Vote #43, 7 March 2002.

¹⁹ NO vote on whether S. Amdt. 3980 is germane, Vote #224, 20 July 2000.

²⁰ Earthjustice, *Hardrock Mining Reform is Long Overdue*, downloaded from www.earthjustice.org/our_work/policy/2007/page.jsp?itemID=30984990, 10 October 2008.

²¹ YES vote to table S. Amdt. 4308, Vote #270, 12 October 2000.

²² Natural Resources Defense Council, *Issues: Water: Arsenic in Drinking Water*, downloaded from www.nrdc.org/water/drinking/qarsenic.asp, 10 October 2008.

²³ YES vote to table S. Amdt. 3078, Vote #587, 29 November 1995.

²⁴ NO vote on S. Amdt. 408, Vote #97, 25 March 2003.

- Restore wetlands, which play a critical role in maintaining water quality and providing habitat for wildlife.
- Strengthen safeguards for drinking water, promote conservation as a solution to water quantity problems in the West, and restore the Great Lakes.²⁵

To protect our waterways, Americans should elect Sen. Barack Obama to be the next president.

About Environment California

We all want clean air, clean water and open space. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress. That's the idea behind Environment California. We focus exclusively on protecting California's air, water and open space. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Paid for by Environment California at www.EnvironmentCalifornia.org and by Environment America at www.EnvironmentAmerica.org.
Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.

²⁵ Obama-Biden, *Barack Obama and Joe Biden: Promoting a Healthy Environment*, downloaded from <http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/issues/EnvironmentFactSheet.pdf>, 10 October 2008.