



Al Franken (MPR photo)

Norm Coleman was pretty good on environmental issues. But Franken has the capacity to become a real leader on environment and energy issues. In his campaign, he called for a major push on clean energy:

When I was a kid, I watched John F. Kennedy tell us that we would put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. I thought he was nuts. But he put our greatest minds and the full backing of the government behind the project, and we did it.

Today, I think we need a new “Apollo project” – this time to fundamentally change our energy policy and end our reliance on foreign oil.

In discussing the Bush Administration’s mercury regulations (which were later struck down by a court), Franken said that companies “have no right to pollute...they should clean up their act.” Allowing pollution is a “subsidy for industry.” It’s not “free market enterprise” to let companies pollute, it’s “giving them money.” So he definitely gets the concept of externalities.

Franken is also serious about policy. As Paul Krugman says: “Al Franken’s dirty secret is that ... he’s a big policy wonk. * * * I used to go on Franken’s radio show, all ready to be jocular — and what he wanted to talk about was the arithmetic of Social Security, or the structure of Medicare Part D. In fact, the only elected official I know who’s wonkier than Al Franken is Rush Holt, my congressman — and he used to be the assistant director of Princeton’s plasma physics lab. ”

And of course, Franken has a sense of humor — a requirement for maintaining sanity in today’s political world.

Oh, and he’s the sixtieth Democratic vote. Did I mention that?