

[The peerless Ron Brownstein asks](#) why are Republicans, even those in swing districts, going out of their way to attack the EPA and the environment generally. His answers are interesting for the environmental movement.

- 1) Enormous pressure for GOP caucus cohesion, especially in light of the retirement of Republican environmental stalwarts like former Rep. Sherwood Boehlert of New York;
- 2) Money, money, money: “So far in the 2012 cycle, coal and oil and gas interests have directed about *90 percent* of their formidable campaign contributions toward the GOP.”
- 3) Lack of fear. Suburban Republicans revolted against the Gingrich Congress’ assault on the environment because their constituents didn’t like it. Now, Republicans don’t think it will be an issue, even though specific environmental measures, such as greenhouse gas regulation and restricting pollution from coal-fired plants, remain highly popular, especially among swing voters.

Brownstein’s conclusion:

the unity that House Republicans have generated against EPA rules also reflects their belief that environmental and public-health groups can’t hurt them politically, even in traditionally sympathetic upscale districts. Unless and until those groups prove them wrong, don’t expect many defectors from the congressional Republican crusade against EPA.

That obviously means one big thing for the generally withered political arm of the environment: ***Forget bipartisanship.***

Environmental groups love to say that both Democrats and Republicans support environmental protection. It’s wrong on the merits, but more importantly, it means that environmental lobby will have to take some scalps before it can be a player in *either* party. Four years ago, the League of Conservation Voters supported the re-election of Rhode Island (then) Republican Senator Lincoln Chaffee, even though his re-election would have kept the upper chamber in the hands of the GOP and kept Rep. James Inhofe as the chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee. Fortunately enough, Chaffee lost, and the Barbara Boxer became the chair. Over and over, environmental political organizations have tried to find Republicans who sound sympathetic enough to endorse, in order to maintain their bipartisan bonafides. That makes no sense anymore.

As Brownstein, notes, given the partisanship in today's Washington, there is simply no point in looking for friendly Republicans. Even if they provide a few token votes, the current "Republican crusade against the EPA" (Brownstein's words, not mine) is so much a part of today's GOP that these votes won't matter: as long as Republicans hold the majority, they will have the subpoena power, and they will use it (and the agenda-setting capability in the House) to attack EPA. And as Brownstein details, environmentalists aren't getting these votes anyway, because moderate Republicans aren't afraid of them.

If the environmental movement wants to rebuild bipartisanship, it should give up on this generation of Republican federal officeholders and go looking on the state and local levels. In the meantime, on the federal level, the environmental movement needs to find a few swing districts, go all in with the Democrat, and try to get some wins.