

A national holiday is a good occasion for thinking about national unity. Reading the GOP platform, you might well conclude that there is absolutely zero hope for bipartisanship on environmental issue. The platform angrily accuses the Obama Administration for pursuing environmental regulation at all costs, heedless of huge economic burdens. The platform also leaves no opportunity unturned for rolling back environmental protections, with a whole bevy of deregulatory demands.

Yet there were hopeful signs among some of the delegates of genuine concern about environmental issues. For instance, *Greenwire* reports:

Missouri delegate Chris Howard, 46, calls himself a “super-conservative Republican.” But he adds, “I believe in conservation. I hunt, I fish. ... I don’t want to see my water polluted so I can’t eat the fish that I catch.” . . .

Paul Frost, a 42-year-old delegate from Massachusetts, said he’s “still up in the air” on man-made climate change. But he says the country should turn toward clean energy — once it becomes affordable and the technology realistic.

Surely those aren’t completely isolated sentiments among Republicans. Hunters and fishermen actually have been strong supporters of some environmental initiatives. Millions of people visit national parks, and they aren’t all Democrats. In fact, based on number of visitors, the most popular national park is the Great Smoky Mountains, deep in the “Red States” part of the map. And *nobody* wants tainted water to drink or unsafe air to breath.

Even the GOP platform itself admits the importance of preserving public health, though it views this as a long-term goal that may need to be sacrificed in the short-term. It also contains a strong endorsement of the need for action to ensure safe drinking water:

“What most Americans take for granted—the safety and availability of our water supply—is in perilous condition. Engineering surveys report crumbling drinking water systems, aging dams, and overwhelmed wastewater infrastructure. Investment in these areas . . . can renew communities, attract businesses, and create jobs. Most importantly, it can assure the health and safety of the American people.”

Admittedly, these are at most straws in the wind in a setting where anti-environmental

sentiments were much on display. But they do suggest that there's something to build on if we can find a way to get past partisan bitterness and talk about shared concerns.

I'll close with what you could call a Red State version of a song by Blue State songwriters. I hope we can all agree at least on this: it's a great performance of a great song.

[youtube=<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLbOBoa8vD8>]