

Eight Republicans voted to pass the Waxman-Markey bill in the House. Some conservative groups are already threatening to punish them for this deviation from party orthodoxy. (That sort of self-destructive retaliation used to be typical of the Democrats, who used it as part of their arsenal of weapons for shooting themselves in the foot.) A refreshingly different perspective is presented in an [op. ed.](#) written by Michael Gerson, who spent six years as a policy adviser and chief speechwriter to President George W. Bush.

It is typical that we praise independent judgment and political nerve in our elected officials — until they show those qualities.

Admittedly, this was not the best time to display conspicuous Republican environmental conscience. Obama's ideological overreach on issues from the fiscal stimulus to health-care nationalization has put conservatives in a scrappy mood. The recession has brought the public's economic anxiety into sharp focus and moved environmental concerns — droughts in the Sahel or floods in Bangladesh — into the hazy distance. And the House cap-and-trade bill itself was a riot of loopholes, concessions and offsets — legislative sausage-making with an excess of offal. . . .

It is perfectly legitimate to argue that the House cap-and-trade system is flawed beyond redemption — so complex and confusing that it only benefits regulators and the lobbyists who outwit them — and that Congress should start over with a carbon tax.

It is also legitimate to contend that, while the cap-and-trade system is flawed, it is better than inaction and necessary to spur innovation. And for eight House Republicans who took this stand at great political risk, it is not only legitimate — it is admirable.

So say we all.