The NY Times has a Christmas Day editorial about the need for the President to take a strong stance in defense of EPA:

> Republicans in the next Congress are obviously set on limiting the Environmental Protection Agency's authority under the Clean Air Act to regulate a wide range of air pollutants — even if it means denying the agency money to run its programs and chaining its administrator, Lisa Jackson, to the witness stand. Fred Upton, who will become the next chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, says he plans to call Ms. Jackson so often for questioning that he'll guarantee her a permanent parking space on Capitol Hill.
>
> It is equally plain that Ms. Jackson has no intention of abandoning her agenda or her defense of one of the most successful of America's landmark environmental statutes. What is not clear is where the White House stands and whether it is prepared to resist industry's standard litany that E.P.A. is as an out-of-control agency threatening jobs with unnecessary rules.

Where does the public stand on environmental issues? According to Gallup, only 15% think the U.S. government is doing "too much" in terms of protecting the n, and 55% think the environment should have priority in terms of developing energy supplies. "Drill baby, drill!" does not seem to have caught on as a popular position. Finally only 10% say they are unsympathetic to the goals of the environmental movement, and 62% say that the movement has done more good than harm.

By a 50-43 margin, the public thinks that the environment matters more than economic growth. The bad news is that a decade ago, the margin was 2:1, so there's been some erosion of support since Bush's election. Another bit of bad news is that the public is rapidly being convinced that the dangers of climate change are exaggerated, a view now held by 48% of the public. From a political point of view, it will be easiest to defend EPA if the Republicans attack regulations of particulates and ground-level ozone, which have clear health impacts. Clearly, environmentalists need to do more to educate the public on this issue and on the benefits of environmental regulation more generally.

It seems clear that, if Obama choses to mobilize the public, he can use the

environmental issue against the Republicans, although it may not be as easy as it was during the Clinton presidency. On the other hand, unlike Clinton post-1994, Obama continues to have one house of Congress on his side, so he is facing less of a threat of adverse legislation. Hopefully, Obama will stand his ground on environmental issues.