

In response to my post expressing disappointment about the treatment of environmental issues in last night's debate, Dan posted this comment:

I agree that the lack of discussion of the environment was disappointing. But we have to remember that the debaters were primarily aiming their remarks at a small segment of the U.S. public whose votes are up for grabs in about nine states. This is a very small segment of the population. I guess we can deduce that this small group of voters doesn't care about the environment much. Presumably anyone who does care about the environment is already voting for Obama.

Is Dan right? Is it better politics to ignore environmental issues? I get that Obama wants to show voters in coal-rich states like Ohio that he cares about their issues. Here's a [post](#) that discusses how the administration is trying to appease Ohio workers affected by the downturn in coal use. But my disappointment isn't that he feels the need to play the politics of coal and conventional fuels. My disappointment is that he can't even utter words like "oil spill" or "clean air" or, heaven forbid, "climate change." I don't think independent voters in Florida or Colorado or Iowa or Nevada would flee to Romney from an acknowledgment that our thirst for oil, gas and coal has environmental consequences. Or that the Obama administration has done a [fair amount](#) to protect the environment. Even on climate change, as Jaynie [blogged](#) about previously, undecided voters overwhelmingly believe it's happening. And I'm not even sure it's right to say that the debate is (or should be) aimed only at a handful of undecided voters in swing states. Part of the purpose of the debate is to make the case to a broader swath of the public about why they should get off the couch and go vote for you. But I may well be wrong about the politics of all of this.

So who's right? Is it better politics for Obama to ignore environmental issues while extolling his efforts to increase oil and gas production? Or is it better politics to mention environmental issues? Commenters, have at it!