

Politics and the Greening Agenda

As members of the Body of Christ, we acknowledge and embrace the divine call for us to be stewards of God's creation. It is our sacred responsibility to respect, preserve and protect all living things on this fragile Earth, our island home. (St. Augustine's Greening Committee Mission Statement)

St. Augustine's -in-the -Woods has been designated as a Greening Congregation by Earth Ministry. As such we attempt by education and example to reduce our parish carbon footprint and apply best practices toward our environment. One aspect of our mission is to educate our congregation on environmental issues and encourage public policy that protects ecology. The Greening



Committee is concerned with the recent direction of U.S. public policy. A summary of a March 4, 2011 article in the *Guardian* (UK) provides a basis for our concerns.

The election of 2008 and first actions of the new administration brought new hope for policies that could address global warming and human threats to the environment. An energy bill passed the House of Representatives with carbon cap and trade provisions. The bill appeared on line for a narrow bipartisan approval in the Senate. However, this possibility caused a reactionary backlash by petroleum and coal corporations against the emerging green agenda. This reaction began in Houston with a lunch hour rally composed of oil company workers who were bussed to the rally site. Eighteen months later a coalition of climate change deniers and energy state Representatives and Senators had begun a full scale assault on environmental bills.

Following the 2010 Congressional elections bills were introduced in both houses of Congress designed to strip the executive branch of its powers to act on climate change. A bill introduced in the House and Senate would bar the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from using existing air pollution laws to reduce carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere.

The green agenda was also attacked by the House budget proposal that would cut EPA's budget by thirty percent. The intent of the EPA defunding was to deny EPA the means to regulate carbon dioxide.

The House also passed a bill removing wolves from the endangered species list. With support from Montana's Democratic Senators this provision survived the budget compromise and was enacted into law. For the first time in the history of the Endangered Species Act politics overrode science - a disturbing precedent.

Pressure from Congress has also impacted the White House. The President has downgraded the post of climate advisor. As yet there has not been a strong push back from the administration to the attacks on the environment.

In the midst of this reaction against policies designed to reduce our carbon usage and continue the non partisan effort begun in 1970 to improve the quality of our environment the Greening Committee is reminded of the words of Eucharistic Prayer C, “At your command all things came to be; the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, planets in their courses, and this fragile earth, our island home. ... From the primal elements you brought forth the human race, and blessed us with memory, reason and skill. You made us the rulers of creation. But we turned against you, and betrayed your trust ...” We pray that humans may set aside shortsighted material interests, return to a concern for earth their island home and again use their reason and skills to help save our planet. To refocus Congressional and Presidential on the dangers facing our environment will also require actions from the many greening congregations.

