

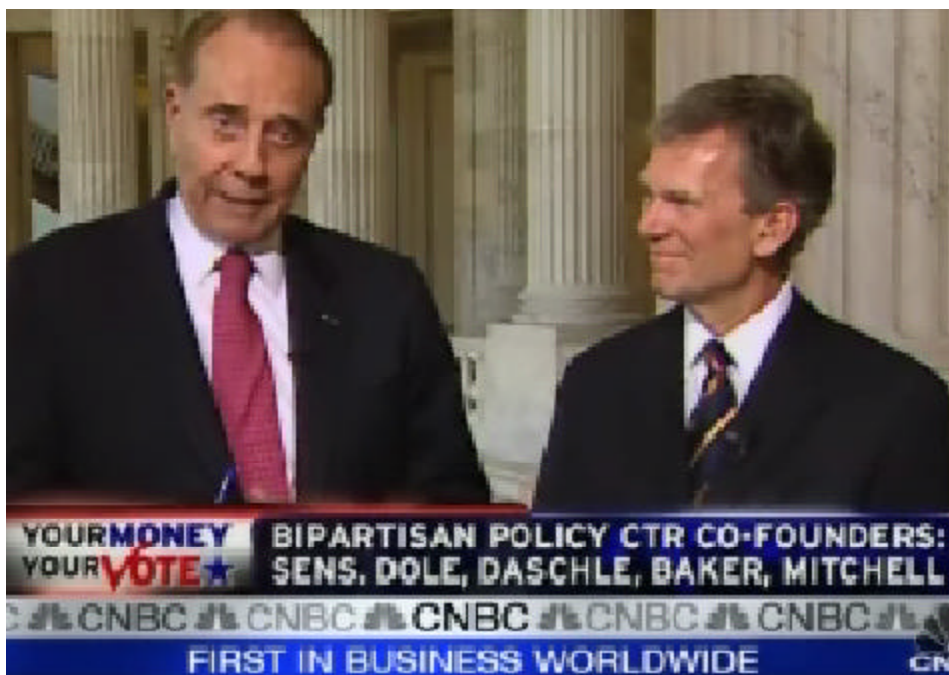
## The National Commission on Energy Policy: “Bipartisanship”: The Cover for a Government Energy Takeover

By Max Borders

***Summary:** Despite the moderation implied by its official-sounding name, the National Commission on Energy Policy’s (NCEP) radical policy platform calls for the federal government to control energy planning in America. A “project” of the innocuous-sounding Bipartisan Policy Center, NCEP actually is funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, which has used NCEP to write and promote the Bingaman-Specter bill to regulate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. NCEP claims the dual threats of terrorism and global warming require government regulation over the energy economy.*

**H**ow do you win a policy debate? First, be sure *you* set the terms of the debate. Then develop your arguments cautiously and methodically to suggest that your only purpose is to discover objective facts. To be taken seriously, keep your prose steady and your sources respectable. You are above the fray—and beyond partisan strife. If the assumptions in your reasoning are controversial, don’t acknowledge the controversy. Instead, suggest that your premises are bipartisan. That will mean your policy conclusions must be acceptable because they are the outgrowth of a political consensus.

In discussing energy policy, drop names of important people in politics, academia, and the corporate world. Your conclusions must surely be right because a panel of distinguished scholars and statesmen endorses them. Even calling the panel members a “commission” suggests that the participants are *commissioned*—pulled with reluctance from their busy lives to solve an urgent world-class problem. Their findings are sure to be



**Bipartisan statesmen backing a left-wing energy agenda:** Former Senate Majority Leaders Bob Dole, a Kansas Republican (above left), and Tom Daschle, a South Dakota Democrat (above right), discuss ethanol and biofuels on May 30. Both co-founded the Bipartisan Policy Center, which—in theory—runs the National Commission on Energy Policy.

top-notch and their policy prescriptions sensible and balanced, forged in the crucible of bipartisanship.

This is the *modus operandi* of the National Commission on Energy Policy (NCEP).

To win the trust of the public and policymakers, NCEP never deviates from its mien of objectivity. To the public, the organization seems like an independent commission, perhaps set up by Congress. In fact, it’s a pressure group and it is funded by liberal ideological foundations and partisan policy groups. Make no mistake, NCEP is a skillful

**September 2007**

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activist group that has a singular goal: *It aims to overhaul the energy business using the heavy hand of government.*

## The Foundation-Backed Bingaman-Specter Bill

In July, the National Commission on Energy Policy praised as “ecologically sound and politically smart” the energy bill introduced by Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and Arlen Specter (R-PA). The Bingaman-Specter bill aims to fight global warming by mandating a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. And no wonder that it received high praise from NCEP—it was written by NCEP, according to the website Hill Heat, which monitors global warming legislation on Capitol Hill. The New York Times was more evasive: it said the Bingaman-Specter bill was written “in conjunction with” NCEP.

In many respects, Bingaman-Specter appears more “moderate” than its three Senate alternatives, known as McCain-Lieberman, Kerry-Snowe, and Sanders-Boxer, after their sponsors. They propose to cut carbon emissions 40% by the year 2020 and 60% by the year 2030. By contrast, Bingaman-Specter cuts emissions by only 7.6% by 2020 and 22% by 2030, and at a much lower cost to the economy. The radical environmental group

Friends of the Earth calls the bill a “weak half measure...backed by some of our country’s biggest coal producers and polluters.”

Yet Bingaman-Specter is a “cap-and-trade” proposal like all the others. It regulates all industries that emit carbon dioxide by creating an artificial scarcity, allowing industries to buy and sell the “right” to emit carbon dioxide. Oil refineries, natural gas plants, manufacturers, and coal-burning powerplants all fall under the bill’s provisions. While automobiles and airlines are not covered, these industries would pass on to consumers the higher fuel prices passed on by the regulated oil and gas companies. Moreover, the bill is endorsed by the AFL-CIO, the United Auto Workers and the United Mine Workers. The unions are satisfied that Bingaman-Specter won’t force manufacturers to outsource their operations. That’s because the bill penalizes imports whenever foreign countries do not impose their own carbon controls. Rich Trumka, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, stood with the heads of Duke Energy and American Electric Power, operators of coal-burning power plants, at a press conference to endorse the legislation. He called the bill “balanced and fair.”

And Bingaman-Specter secured the key support of Alaska’s two Republican senators. Senator Lisa Murkowski said the bill provided “tens of billions of dollars” to help her state cope with “highway and airport damage, water and sewer line repairs, seawall construction, port and pipeline repairs and village relocation costs” that might be caused by global warming. Senator Ted Stevens confessed that he did not know whether or not carbon emissions cause global warming, but “we must take steps to protect people in the Arctic.”

Cap-and-trade legislation like the Bingaman-Specter bill is no doubt politically smart because it silently shifts the cost burden to consumers in the form of higher prices while distributing carbon allowances worth “tens

or hundreds of billions of dollars” to companies that emit carbon dioxide, according to a July 9 letter from Congressional Budget Office (CBO) director Peter Orszag to Senator Bingaman. The letter, a response to Bingaman’s reaction to a highly critical April 25 issue brief by the CBO, observes that whether or not the cap-and-trade program cuts carbon emissions, it will impose huge costs on energy and energy intensive users. Indeed, that is its purpose. Instead of relying on the marketplace, policymakers will have the discretion to decide who will bear those costs.

## Who Are NCEP’s Founding Fathers?

On its website, NCEP says it is one of three projects of the “new” Bipartisan Policy Center (BCP). In March 2007, the Center held an inaugural luncheon in Washington, D.C., hosted by its supposed leaders, four former U.S. Senate majority leaders, two from each party—81 year-old Howard Baker (R-TN), Bob Dole, 83 (R-KS), George Mitchell, 73 (D-ME), and Tom Daschle, 59 (D-SD). Initially, the Center proposes to tackle three issues: energy, agriculture and national security. The senators say their purpose is to promote civility and improve the tone of political discourse, and to show that “evidence-based collaborative approaches can gain the public and political momentum needed to forge political consensus.”

News reports say the Center has a 2007 budget of \$7 million provided by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation “and its partners.” The 20 Center staff members are led by an executive director named Jason Grumet.

Establishment Washington is pleased. Washington Post columnist David Broder, an apostle of liberal consensus, approved the efforts of the four former senators to encourage lawmakers to work together: “That’s a good thing for the country.” USA Today founder Al Neuharth imagined how wonderful it would be if only President George W. Bush were to meet with the four ex-

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**The four co-founders of the Bipartisan Policy Center. The photograph appears on the group's website.**

senators once a month: "They'd give him the best advice he can get on how to salvage his presidency and re-nationalize this great nation."

Now conservatives may scoff at these warm and fuzzy stories of former senators urging lawmakers to play nice, but they aren't learning the real story. The Center's tax forms tell a more complex tale about the origins of the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC). For one thing, BPC is an outgrowth of the National Commission on Energy Policy (NCEP), not the other way around. The bipartisan group hasn't decided to focus its attention on energy policy. Instead, advocates of more government controls over the energy sector, funded by Hewlett, created a group to cover their real intentions with a bipartisan gloss.

NCEP's origins go back five years. Formed in 2002 as a private operating foundation, NCEP is bankrolled primarily by the California-based William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (2006 assets—\$8.2 billion). NCEP's tax form 990-PF shows that Hewlett contributed \$2 million (of \$6.2 million in contributions) in 2002. NCEP also received gifts of \$1.3 million from the Energy Foundation and \$200,000 each from the MacArthur and Packard foundations. The group's stated mission is to, in the words of its principal report, "End the Energy Stalemate" and find "A Bipartisan Strategy to Meet America's Energy Challenges."

In 2003, NCEP reported no additional income, while expenses were \$2.8 million. Then in 2004, both NCEP revenues and expenses jumped to \$3.9 million, while in 2005 (the last

year publicly available), contributions were \$2.4 million and expenses \$3.6 million. The tax forms show the major donor once again was the Hewlett Foundation (\$3.4 million in 2004; \$2 million in 2005). Other donors included the Pew Charitable Trusts (\$300,000 in 2004 and 2005) and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation (\$200,000 in 2004).



**NCEP executive director Jason Grumet**

In 2005 NCEP changed its name to the Bipartisan Policy Center but retained Jason Grumet as executive director. Grumet, who helped design NCEP's mission, also helped recruit its members—NCEP's ostensible co-founders are former EPA head William K. Reilly (under the first President George Bush); John Rowe, CEO of Exelon Corporation, a company that runs the country's largest group of nuclear plants; and John Holdren, who is the Teresa and John Heinz professor of environmental policy at Harvard as well as director of the Woods Hole Research Center.

Other commission members represent a powerful mix of interest groups: Ralph Cavanagh, director of the energy program at

the National Resources Defense Council; Robert E. Grady, managing partner for venture operations of the Carlyle Group, the well-connected private equity firm; Leo Gerard, president of the United Steelworkers union; former Republican governor of Oklahoma Frank Keating, now head of the insurer's lobby; and former CIA director James Woolsey, a conservative who backs more federal spending on fuel efficiency research. Former Rep. Phil Sharp (D-IN), now president of Resources for the Future, is the Commission's "Congressional Chair."

Before joining NCEP in 2002, Grumet was executive director of the Clean Air Association of the Northeast States, an advocacy group representing the eight state air quality agencies of New England, New York and New Jersey. Now he is coordinating far more important persons to achieve a national policy goal.

### **The Commission's Goals**

If you need to read its tax forms to discover NCEP's origins, you will have to cut through a jungle of rhetoric to learn how the group proposes to get what it wants. In essence, NCEP proposes to bridge the ideological divide separating conservatives from liberals by tapping into two fears that are unique to the 21st century: *terrorism* and *global warming*. The right worries over terrorism, while the left shudders at global warming. NCEP offers lawmakers a policy panacea that it says will eliminate or mitigate these problems.

The common factor linking terrorism and climate change is America's so-called "dependency" or "addiction" to fossil fuels.



NCEP is the purveyor of the new centrist wisdom: 1) if the terrorists win, they will use Middle East oil to threaten the U.S. and 2) blame fossil fuels for the release of the greenhouse gas CO<sub>2</sub>. Cutting oil production and consumption will solve both problems.

NCEP member James Woolsey believes America's dependence on foreign oil jeopardizes U.S. national security:

"Saudi Arabia made \$160 billion last year [2005] exporting oil; they give several billion per year to the Wahhabis, an Islamist sect that controls religion and education in Saudi Arabia, and other Wahhabi institutions in other parts of the world such as Pakistan. Those madrassas, for instance in Pakistan, teach Pakistani children to hate Shiites, Jews, Christians, anyone who can be counted as an infidel. Depending on the Imam, some of the things they say, particularly about Shiites, Jews, and homosexuals and apostates are essentially genocidal. That is really al

Qaeda's ideology as well. ... The result of [this] is that the war on terror is the only war the United States has fought, with the obvious exception of the civil war, in which we pay for both sides." (source: <http://www.wfs.org/futintervja07.htm>, "Ending the Oil Era," The Futurist, July-August 2007, Interview with James Woolsey)

Consider this "key challenge" from the introduction of NCEP's flagship report, *Ending the Energy Stalemate: A Bipartisan Strategy to Meet America's Energy Challenges*:

Reliable access to the energy resources needed to support a healthy economy remains the core imperative, but in the 21st Century, energy security also means reducing the macroeconomic and *terrorism-related vulnerabilities* in the current geopolitical distribution of oil supply and demand, and coming to grips with the *environmental impacts* of the current energy system. (Italics added.)

Terrorism and climate change threaten our security and prosperity. However, the Commission assures Americans they can still get enough energy to keep the economy moving if they accept government interference in the energy markets. "Energy independence" is really a synonym for "alternative energy." This is what NCEP wants.

On every page of its website [[www.energycommission.org](http://www.energycommission.org)] NCEP links to its report, "Ending the Energy Stalemate," which is a foil for its goal of reducing fossil fuel production and use. The report gives a nod to the importance of energy security, energy independence, expanding energy supplies, and creating new technologies. But look into its other publications and you discover that NCEP is preoccupied with climate change:

- § "Allocating Allowances in a Greenhouse Trading System"
- § "Potential Impacts of Climate Change on the United States"

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## GOOD DEEDS, SQUANDERED LEGACIES

A cautionary tale first published in 1994, this third edition by Martin Morse Wooster testifies to the continuing importance of the issue of donor intent. It contains new material focused on the ongoing *Robertson Foundation v. Princeton University* case and an update on the tragic battle over the Barnes Foundation. An Executive Summary is also included.

Wooster, senior fellow at Capital Research Center, tells a cautionary tale of what has gone wrong with many of this country's preeminent foundations. But he also shows that other foundations, such as those established by Lynde and Harry Bradley, James Duke, and Conrad Hilton, safeguard their founders' values and honor their intentions.

- § “CO<sub>2</sub> and Non-CO<sub>2</sub> Greenhouse Gases”
- § “Adaptation as a Response to Climate Change”
- § “Realizing the Benefits of Greenhouse Gas Offsets”
- § “Design Issues for Market-based Reduction Strategies”

The quantity of NCEP climate change-oriented materials far exceeds its research on energy independence and energy security. Indeed, most of NCEP’s work on conservation and energy supply is a supplement to this emphasis.

Moreover, NCEP simply assumes that global warming is “settled science” and ignores the work of climatologists such as Richard Lindzen, Tim Ball, and Roy Spencer who are skeptics about man-made climate change (also called “anthropogenic climate change.”) NCEP is intent on planning a wholesale restructuring of the energy sector as if it is in the power of technocratic elites to move around oil, natural gas, nuclear power and other energy sectors like pieces on a chessboard. Or, to mix metaphors, NCEP puts the cart before the horse—and it’s designed quite a cart.

NCEP is imbued with what F.A. Hayek called the planner’s “fatal conceit”: it assumes energy markets can be designed by bureaucrats on high, that you can plan and regulate a highly complex market like the market for energy to produce an ideal result. For instance, NCEP proposes to “expand the energy supply” by producing more cellulosic ethanol and imposing stricter fuel economy standards on vehicles. NCEP even peppers its policy papers with the term “market” to justify its carbon trading schemes. This tactic is meant to allay the fear that climate change mitigation strategies will damage the economy while producing negligible benefits.

## The Fallacy of Central Planning

On its website, NCEP repeatedly references a paper by the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) titled “How Biofuels Can Help End America’s Oil Dependence,” in support of the idea that ethanol could someday be cost-competitive with gasoline. The NRDC authors believe a mature biofuels science will allow ethanol to be “produced at prices as low as \$0.39 per gallon.”

But even if biofuels could be produced at this price, what kind of government subsidies would be required to create a biofuels industry in place of industry based on fossil fuels—and at what cost to the environment? We already know that ethanol/sugar cane



**Robert Whaples found that his fellow economists doubt global warming would hurt the U.S. economy.**

subsidies in Brazil contribute to the destruction of the Amazon rainforest: Farmers must cut down forests to create arable land to plant sugar cane. Why shouldn’t agricultural subsidies or ethanol mandates in the U.S. have similar effects in destroying carbon-sequestering forests<sup>1</sup> or creating a spike in the price of corn<sup>2</sup>—something that’s happening now, causing shortages in the staple food of



**Economist Bruce Yandle argues the Kyoto Protocol is already a failure.**

Mexico’s poor and raising the price of livestock fodder.

NCEP thinks biomass such as switchgrass eventually will produce most of the cellulosic ethanol (supplanting corn). But no one knows

whether the production costs of ethanol will be less than the cost of producing fossil fuels, particularly when measured over the life of the production cycle. The key question becomes: Does it cost more energy to produce ethanol than the value of the energy ethanol creates?

This is not an idle question. To date, many players in the environmental movement seem willing to abandon other items on their green policy agenda in order to slow global warming. Some tout Brazilian ethanol even if it means increased clear-cutting of the Amazon rainforests. Others accept the introduction of new pollutants created by ethanol production. Some even support nuclear power as an energy alternative.

These and other unintended *environmental* consequences are what happens when you believe the fallacy that government planners can organize the production and use of energy. But there are unintended *economic* effects too. Let the planners loose and watch what happens:

## “Opportunity Costs”

This is the economist’s term for the things your money can’t buy if your dollars are already committed elsewhere. Every tax dollar that goes to give energy producers an incentive to cut carbon emissions is a dollar that can’t be used for something that might be even more important. In this sense, government subsidies represent lost opportunities. Energy expert Rob Bradley<sup>3</sup> refers to political advocacy and lobbying as “dead-weight entrepreneurship,” a term describing the cost of diverting resources to attract and keep government subsidies. Spending on lobbying that increases the power of politicians is an opportunity cost for everyone.

## Costs vs. Benefits

Government regulation has direct costs paid for by taxes. While energy planners insist that the benefits of planning outweigh its costs, a growing consensus<sup>4</sup> of economists say the benefit of energy planning is negligible. Regarding climate change, many argue that there may be no net benefits to mankind. Simply said: we would all be poorer.

Dr. Robert Whaples, an economist at Wake Forest University, asked 210 economists to gauge the impact of global warming. Whaples

found that 19.6% agreed with the controversial Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change which predicted that U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita would be reduced by 5% or more by the end of the 21st century if the world did nothing to address industrial greenhouse gas emissions. (The Stern Review, by Sir Nicholas Stern, a British economist, was carried out at the request of the British government. It is one of the most alarmist economic analyses of the potential economic impacts of climate change).

Of the 210 economists surveyed by Whaples:

- § 21.4% agreed with Yale economist William Nordhaus that U.S. GDP losses would be somewhere between 1% and 5%;
- § 35.7% believed that warming would reduce U.S. GDP by less than 1% and may even increase it as much as 1%;
- § 16.1% believed that U.S. GDP would *increase* between 1% and 5% as a consequence of warming; and
- § 7.1% though U.S. GDP would *increase* by more than 5% because of warming.

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In other words, more economists thought global warming would improve the U.S. economy than those who believed the Stern Review. Whatever the consensus among scientists on man-made climate change, the above survey suggests a consensus among economists that global warming—whether anthropogenic or natural—will not have dire economic consequences and may even have benefits.

### **Corporate Welfare and “Rent-seeking”**

Government regulations create winners and losers. In the energy sector the winners who benefit from carbon taxes and subsidies are the corporate lobbyists and left-wing activists who influence how politicians shape the energy economy. Instead of relying on market forces, a self-selected group of power brokers diverts resources to its coffers while hiding behind the moralistic rhetoric of saving planet Earth. This is what economist Bruce Yandle has described as the coalition of “Baptists and bootleggers”—the unlikely coalition of religious moralists and the economically motivated. In the 1920s, the coalition favored Prohibition; today it supports the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change.

But the Kyoto Protocol is already a failure, Yandle argues: “It is highly likely that total carbon emissions will be larger in the future, not smaller, despite Kyoto.” Europe, despite its pious environmental rhetoric, is already violating the carbon-mitigation provisions of Kyoto. Developing countries such as China and India, also Kyoto signatories, are exempt from the treaty’s rules and will almost certainly continue to increase their carbon emissions in order to grow their respective economies. According to Yandle:

This situation suggests that more is going on as a result of Kyoto than a commitment to reducing carbon emissions. The Kyoto Protocol creates a new and enhanced stage on which nations, groups, and companies can pursue their special interests. The treaty opens up opportunities for favor seeking that were previously closed.

Groups alarmed about global warming

can still support the treaty on the grounds that carbon emissions may decline eventually. But others, including companies and countries who want bigger markets, appear to be paying more attention to the strategic here-and-now possibilities offered by regulation under the Kyoto Protocol. There will be winners and losers in the post-Kyoto struggle, and expectations about who will win and lose are guiding much of today’s political jockeying.<sup>5</sup>

The predictions in Yandle’s 1998 article (“Bootleggers, Baptists, and Global Warming”<sup>6</sup>) are coming true. Companies like Archer Daniels Midland benefit from ethanol mandates and investment banking firms like Goldman Sachs plan to benefit from carbon trading. (See “Al Gore’s Carbon Crusade: The Money and Connections Behind It,” by Deborah Corey Barnes, *Foundation Watch*, August 2007.)

NCEP is the intellectual handmaiden for both the moralistic greens and the industries and financiers that will reap the rewards of carbon trading, taxes and offsets. It’s not hard to see why they want NCEP to develop arguments for an emerging “political consensus” in support of energy regulation. What economists call “rent-seeking” is simply lobbying and living off government policymaking.

### **The Façade of Bipartisanship**

In order to maintain its façade of bipartisanship, NCEP argues that at least some of its climate change proposals are market-driven solutions. For example, NCEP suggests lifting the U.S. moratorium on constructing nuclear power plants, which has contributed to our reliance on fossil fuels. For 30 years, the moratorium has implicitly subsidized oil companies. It’s no wonder that companies like Exelon and Duke Energy, which have nuclear and natural gas interests, support the Bingaman-Specter bill.

Nonetheless, most NCEP prescriptions for our energy future are troubling. The NCEP political consensus uses the fear of international terrorism to win conservative support



for national and international global warming regulatory policies. These fears—and the policies they generate—are the basis of its grand bipartisan illusion. The illusion invites people across the political spectrum to let economic planners attempt the impossible—and force the rest of us to live with their inevitable failure.

*Max Borders is an adjunct scholar for the National Center for Policy Analysis, and New Media Coordinator for the Civitas Institute. His op-eds frequently appear in the Washington Examiner.*

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cei.org/pdf/5532.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.technologyreview.com/Energy/18173/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.energyrealism.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/Default.aspx?ID=165>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.hoover.org/publications/digest/4510936.html> (short version), <http://www.perc.org/pdf/ps14.pdf> (longer version)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.perc.org/pdf/ps14.pdf>

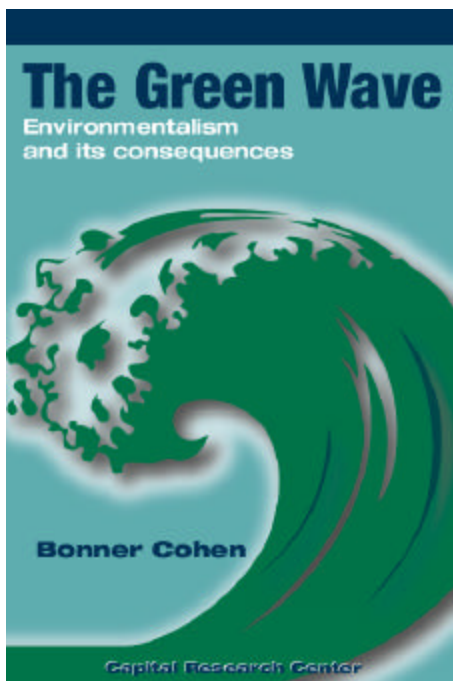
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# BrieflyNoted

Nearly 2 million pages of documents covering the time Senator **Hillary Rodham Clinton** (D-New York) spent in the White House as first lady will remain under lock and key in a Little Rock, Arkansas, archive until after the 2008 presidential election, the Los Angeles Times reports. **Melissa Walker**, chief archivist at the **Clinton Presidential Library**, said releasing the documents could take years. "We're processing as fast as we can." **Judicial Watch**, a public interest law firm, filed suit against the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration to obtain access to the documents after the agency failed to respond to the firm's April 2006 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. **Ray McNally**, a GOP political consultant, said the files are "the mother lode of opposition research...Opposition researchers would be very hungry to see what's there."

The **Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)**, a liberal advocacy group that claims to speak for the poor and minorities but also runs big-money community development corporations, has settled what Washington Secretary of State **Sam Reed** called "the largest case of voter-registration fraud in the state's history." ACORN, which tries to change the outcome of elections, agreed to pay \$25,000 to escape prosecution on voter fraud charges. ACORN employees were supposed to help eligible voters complete voter-registration cards but instead submitted cards with false names such as boxing champion **Leon Spinks**. The King County Canvassing Board has already invalidated more than 1,700 ACORN registrations. The Seattle Times editorialized that "ACORN has done some similar things in other states, and it needs to be cleaned up or shut down."

"The **American Medical Association**, which received \$286 million in revenue last year to protect the profession, has served physicians poorly," **Manhattan Institute** fellow **Regina E. Herzlinger** argued in a recent Washington Post op-ed. The incomes of medical doctors fell an inflation-adjusted 7% from 1995 to 2003, while academic medical journals routinely churn out studies "that supposedly document the cupidity and ignorance of practicing physicians while lauding the virtues of single-payer health-care systems, such as those in Canada or Britain." Meanwhile, the Harvard Business School professor noted the AMA has "declared war on retail medical clinics, located in places such as **CVS** and **Wal-Mart**...[which help] to unclog crowded emergency rooms, and... enable the uninsured to obtain care at reasonable costs." Herzlinger is also the author of *Who Killed Health Care?* (McGraw-Hill, 2007).

A coalition of liberal pressure groups including the **NAACP**, the **National Education Association**, the **Center for American Progress's** offshoot group **Campus Progress**, and the **Higher Education Project** of **Ralph Nader's U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG)** is backing the proposed College Cost Reduction Act. The measure, which passed the House of Representatives on a 273-149 vote in July, would cut in half the interest rate on government-subsidized student loans. President **George W. Bush** has threatened to veto the bill because it makes government support more widely available and doesn't target only the neediest students.

The **U.S. Chamber of Commerce** reports that the **Association of Trial Lawyers of America**, which recently renamed itself the **American Association for Justice**, has convinced more than 10 state-level trial lawyers' associations to expunge the phrase "trial lawyers" from their names. Then-ATLA president **Ken Suggs** noted last year, "If our message is about helping lawyers, we lose. On the other hand, if we're about getting justice and holding wrongdoers accountable, we win." ATLA reportedly increased its communications staff by 200% and hired image makers for the re-branding. Because of frivolous lawsuits pushed by the plaintiffs' bar, "small business owners are forced to close up shop and doctors move out of state," according to the Chamber. "Removing the words 'trial' and 'lawyers' from their names won't erase the harm they've caused to working families and consumers every day."

**Greenpeace USA** has launched a campaign to pressure members of Congress to make global warming legislation a top priority. "Congress is definitely feeling the heat from their constituents as they join Project Hot Seat and speak out," the group says. Greenpeace is urging its followers to send 50,000 postcards to Congress and to "take to the streets."

The **National Council of La Raza** condemned the Bush administration for its recently unveiled plan to step up enforcement of the nation's immigration laws, a move it says "could put millions of Americans at risk of losing their jobs." **Janet Murguia**, president of La Raza, the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the U.S., said the plan "amounts to an assault on the civil rights of all Hispanic Americans...[that] will result in the racial profiling of all working Latinos."



