

'Greenest Republicans in Congress' Hailed by Environmental Group (Crosswalk.com - Chesterfield,VA,USA)

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(CNSNews.com) - Three GOP members of Congress share an environmental group's highest praise in its annual performance scorecard.

Sen.

Susan Collins (Maine), Rep. Dave Reichert (Wash.) and Rep. Chris Shays (Conn.) all received the title "Greenest Republican in Congress" for 2007, according to a news release from the Republicans for Environmental Protection (REP).

The third annual scorecard rated

GOP lawmakers on a scale of 0 to 100. However, scores could fall below zero or exceed 100 based on "credits" or "demerits" awarded for "significant non-voting actions demonstrating either positive or negative leadership on environmental issues," the statement indicated.

As

a result, Collins' total of 104 in the Senate was slightly higher than the 103 received by Reichert and Shays in the House of Representatives, even though all three shared the "Greenest Republican" title for the year, the group stated.

Four other GOP members of the House had

perfect scores of 100: Michael Castle (Del.), Mark Kirk (Ill.) and New Jersey congressmen Michael Ferguson and Christopher Smith.

According

to the scorecard, Rep. Frank Wolf (Va.) was the "most improved" member of the House, jumping from 42 in 2006 to 93 the following year. Also, Sen. Arlen Specter (Penn.) was "most improved" in the Senate, moving from 0 in 2006 to 64 a year later.

"We are very proud of the

environmental leadership we are seeing from our top-scoring lawmakers," said REP President Martha Marks. "They are playing a crucial role in safeguarding our environment and building the bipartisan support necessary to address our most pressing environmental challenges.

"Keeping

these GOP environmental champions in office should be a priority for anyone who cares about responsible stewardship of our environment," Marks added.

"At a time when our party leaders are re-assessing the GOP brand, they should follow the lead of those who did well on this scorecard and recognize that good stewardship and conservation are core conservative values, which are shared by the vast majority of Americans," stated David Jenkins, the organization's government affairs director.

Nevertheless, the overall environmental performance of Republicans in Congress "showed mixed results," the group noted in its release. That's a significant change from last year's scorecard, which showed a "marked improvement" when federal GOP officials voted on environmental issues in 2006.

The average score of Senate Republicans rose from 13 percent in both 2005 and 2006 to 27 percent this past year, but the House GOP average fell from 30 percent two years ago to 21 percent in 2007. In large part, the House decline reflected the loss of eight of pro-conservation Republicans during the 2006 midterm election.

"Still, far too many Republicans had low scores," the REP statement said. The lowest-scoring member in the House was Joe Barton (Tex.), who received -7. In the Senate, the "low achiever" was James Inhofe (Okla.), who scored -4.

"We hope that low-scoring lawmakers will reflect on their records and realize that there is nothing conservative about waste and pollution," Jenkins said.

However, H. Sterling Burnett, senior policy analyst with the conservative National Center for Policy Analysis, told Cybercast News Service on Thursday that the new REP scorecard represents the "same old, same old" practice of environmental extremists.

Burnett noted that the group tends to honor liberal GOP officials who are elected in the northeastern and northwestern parts of the country. "They score better than their colleagues, who may care as much or more about the environment than they do but see a different way of protecting it, which is through markets," he said.

"These are the same Republicans who complain that gas prices are too high but then won't let us do the only thing that will bring them down, which is increase domestic production from the public lands in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve in Alaska and offshore drilling," Burnett added.

"In

doing so, they not only do the country a disservice, but they also do their party a disservice" because on the oil and gas issue, "the Republicans are right," he said. "They understand Economics 101. There is supply and demand, and demand worldwide is high, so fossil fuels are and will be the dominant fuel for the next 30 years, at least."

Burnett

continued that liberal Republicans "do the same thing with global warming. They put the plaudits of the international community ahead of the interests of the people they were elected to represent."

"Even

if you believe global warming is a problem and is caused by humans -- which I seriously doubt -- their proposals will do nothing to prevent further warming and will put us at a competitive disadvantage with countries like China -- which already produces more greenhouse gases than we do -- thus losing jobs and raising energy prices," he stated.

"I don't know many Americans who are saying, 'We just don't pay enough for gasoline,'" Burnett added. "And I don't talk with a lot of people who say, 'My electric bill wasn't high enough last month.' They may be out there, but they're not my neighbors."

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