

I have been active in fighting for legislation in Congress to protect the environment from exploitation and abuse, working to protect endangered and threatened species, preserve public lands and forests, and safeguard our air and water. I am proud of my voting record, which has earned me the highest ratings from the [Defenders of Wildlife Action Fund](#) and the [League of Conservation Voters](#)

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Climate Change

The most significant threat to our global environment is climate change. The overwhelming scientific evidence makes clear that climate change is a real phenomenon, and that human activities play a significant role. Now is the time to act on climate change. Twenty of the hottest years in recorded history occurred since the 1980's. Glaciers and permafrost are vanishing. Weather patterns are shifting. Migration patterns are being disrupted.

Meanwhile, human output of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases has reached an unprecedented level. These gases trap excess heat within the atmosphere, increasing the greenhouse effect. A tremendous amount of carbon dioxide comes from our cars, factories, and power plants. To fight climate change, dramatic changes will be needed in transportation, energy production, and public policy, and human behavior, and education will be essential to allowing those changes to happen.

Addressing our addiction to fossil fuels and foreign oil

Our energy policies play a key role in our economic prosperity and the quality of life in our nation, and should be formed through an open and deliberative process. To this end, I have taken an active role in establishing the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition (SEEC) in the House of Representatives. SEEC is working to ensure legislation to address our energy needs also creates millions of new, clean energy jobs, makes America more energy independent and secure, and addresses global warming. [[read more](#)]

Good Science Makes Good Policy

If nothing is done, climate change will have dire impacts on human existence and will dramatically alter life on Earth according to a [report](#) from the United States Global Change Research Program shows, the impacts of climate change are already being felt today, and they will only grow more significant in the future if we continue with business as usual.

The consequences of sudden climate change, such as rising oceans, increased storm activity, and the displacement of wildlife, are a threat to the economy, our coastal cities, and possibly the very existence of humanity. The public policy that will stop global warming must be informed by the best science.

To reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide, significant investment and incentives will be needed to change the technology, processes, and products that run our economy. We need all of the cars on the road to be 'greener' than the Toyota Prius I drive today. Electrical plants that burn fossil fuels will need to be replaced by facilities that use renewable energy sources, such as geothermal, wind, solar, and tidal energy.

Private industry can actually benefit from the shift to renewable energy. Innovative companies can play a role in the research and development of alternative energy technology. They can develop new products and infrastructure that will bring green energy to the masses. With the proper incentives, renewable energy technology will open up whole new markets.

Knowledge is the Key

In order to make wise choices, America truly needs to understand climate change, its causes, and potential impacts. Our nation, and our world, has the potential to address the dangers of climate change. Because of the technological advances brought about by scientists in Silicon Valley and elsewhere, new products and technologies are becoming available to allow us to utilize newly available forms of energy. I will continue working with my colleagues to ensure that the government implements incentives and programs to promote the use of renewable energy. To ensure broad implementation of these measures, however, a large scale public information and education campaign will be needed.

As a former teacher, I understand the importance of imparting knowledge to help people make wise decisions. By providing people clear information about climate change, in a variety of forms, we can take away the fear and the sense of helplessness, and move people to take action. By informing people of the new technologies and programs as they become available, we can ensure maximum understanding and maximum impact. To address this issue, in previous Congresses I have introduced the [Global Warming Education Act](#), which sought to create an educational program within the National Science Foundation designed to broaden understanding of climate change, possible long and short-term consequences, and potential solutions. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I have worked to ensure that NSF, NOAA, NASA, and other relevant agencies have received funding to pursue climate change education efforts. I encourage you to continue learning more about this issue, and to talk about this issue with your family, neighbors and friends. Together, we can ensure that the planet we leave to our children is as healthy as the one which we inherited ourselves.

Protecting Endangered and Threatened Species

Many species of plants and animals have been threatened by increased development over recent years, and I believe it is our responsibility to ensure that they do not face extinction. For example, west coast salmon levels have declined to only 10-15% of what they had been in the 1800s. This decline has hurt the economies of fishing-dependent coastal and rural inland communities throughout northern California. To reverse these trends, I have supported efforts such as the [Pacific Salmon Recovery Act](#), which would restore salmon habitats in coastal waters and upland drainages; the Fisheries Recovery Act, which would, recover depleted fish stocks and promote the long-term sustainability of marine fisheries, the Fisheries Science and Management Enhancement Act, which would bring science to the fishery management process;

and the Salmon Planning Act, designed to help restore salmon populations in the Pacific Northwest.

Preserving Public Lands, Forests, Farms, and Ranch Lands

Clearcutting, roadbuilding, and excessive logging are causing alarming amounts of environmental damage, especially in ancient forests, roadless areas, and other fragile forests. It is evident that federal forest policy must provide help to protect these areas for future generations. To accomplish this goal, I have supported efforts including the [National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act](#), which would codify the [Forest Service's Roadless Area Conservation Rule](#) promulgated early in 2001; the [Act to Save America's Forests](#), which would ban clearcutting on all federal forestlands and ends logging in the last virgin forests, roadless areas, and other core areas of the federal forest system; and the [America's Red Rock Wilderness Act](#).

Defending Sensitive Areas from Oil and Gas Drilling

A key element of California's diverse economy is its unparalleled stretch of coastline. Indeed, it has been the economic value of the coast that has in great part spurred the efforts to end offshore oil and gas drilling in California. I have consistently joined many of my California colleagues in Congress in opposing efforts to conduct offshore oil and gas inventories and to open these areas to drilling through legislation such as the [West Coast Ocean Protection Act](#).

I have also opposed drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge ([ANWR](#)) and the inclusion of

drilling in ANWR in any energy legislation or budget reconciliation bill. Proponents of drilling who claim that pipelines in pristine wilderness areas are perfectly safe have been dealt a blow by the revelation of massive leakage and corrosion in BP's pipe network based in Prudhoe Bay and in the TransAlaska Pipeline.

BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

On April 20, 2010, a large explosion on British Petroleum's (BP) Deepwater Horizon oil rig caused the death of 11 crew members, injured a number of other workers, and led to the sinking of the rig two days later. Millions of gallons of crude oil contaminated the Gulf of Mexico, impacting the livelihoods of those who make their living from the Gulf's resources and endangering countless fish, plants, and wildlife in the area. The Obama Administration responded to the BP disaster and mobilized government resources to minimize the harm on the health, economy, and environment of the Gulf Coast, but damage was done that must be repaired and lessons must be learned so we don't repeat the past.

Working with my colleagues in the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition, I have taken a number of steps toward ensuring that we learn from this tragedy so that it never happens again. I cosponsored legislation to establish a blue-ribbon commission to serve as an important long-term addition to the Obama Administration's short-term efforts to investigate and respond to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The Commission would investigate the cause, response and impacts of the BP disaster, and it would make recommendations on our ability to evaluate and address the risks of offshore drilling. Furthermore, the Commission would investigate BP and other private companies involved with the spill, as well as the performance of federal and state agencies responsible for oversight of offshore drilling.

My colleagues and I have also urged the Secretary of the Interior to promptly and thoroughly investigate whether another BP platform in the Gulf, the BP Atlantis, is currently operating safely and adhering to the law. In March 2009, a whistleblower notified MMS that he believed BP lacked a large percentage of engineer-approved, up-to-date drawings for Atlantis's subsea components. A review of a BP database shows that of the more than 7,176 documents and drawings for Atlantis's subsea components, a total of 6,393 of them – over 90% – had not been approved by a professional engineer, as required by industry minimum standards and MMS regulations. A 2008 email from BP's own management indicated that using these incomplete or inaccurate documents “could lead to catastrophic Operator errors due to their assuming the drawing is correct.” A thorough investigation of BP Atlantis must include interviewing the whistleblower and other BP employees, including the ombudsman, as well as examining whether the company properly responded to the whistleblower's concerns. Lessons learned will

help shed light on how the company views safety requirements for very complex platforms operating in challenging deep water environments. It could even shed light on the cause of the Deepwater Horizon accident.

Protecting Air Quality

Greenhouse gas emissions and traditional pollutants threaten the quality of life for all Americans. I have cosponsored several bills to clean up the air we breathe, and I steadfastly support the Environmental Protection Agency's authority provided under the Clean Air Act to regulate the emission of pollutants including carbon dioxide from power plants and mercury emissions from cement kilns. I was opposed to provisions pushed by House Republicans to strip these authorities from EPA through H.R. 1, the full year Continuing Resolution for Fiscal Year 2011.

Vehicle emissions are another threat to air quality. On the personal level, I drive a hybrid electric car when I am at work in Washington. While the impact of this one car alone is small, the example I hope it sets for those I represent and all Americans is much larger – individual decisions made by individual Americans to purchase alternative fuel cars and reduce their gasoline consumption send a strong message to Congress and the President that we don't want to remain dependent on gasoline. I also believe that we must increase fuel economy standards to achieve this goal.

Ensuring Clean Water

The cleanliness of our water faces threats on a number of fronts. For example, contamination by perchlorate, a carcinogen, threatens drinking water supplies nationwide, and in South Santa Clara County in particular. To address the problem, I sponsored the Safe Drinking Water for Healthy Communities, which would declare perchlorate a contaminant and require the

establishment of a maximum contamination safety level, require that information on the discharge and storage of perchlorate be reported to the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) and the appropriate state water pollution control agency, impose fines on violators, and deposit those fines in a perchlorate pollution prevention fund which would provide loans to public water suppliers and private well owners to replace water contaminated by perchlorate. I have also worked with my South Santa Clara County colleagues to secure funding to clean up contaminated ground water in the Morgan Hill-San Martin-Gilroy area.

I am pleased that in February 2011, the EPA announced its intent to set a national limit for the amount of perchlorate that will be allowed in drinking water. I am also encouraged by EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson's testimony before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on February 2, 2011 that EPA is likely to regulate hexavalent chromium in drinking water as well. An Environmental Working Group [report](#) on Chromium-6 found an above average level of Chromium-6 in water tested from San Jose. Shortly after the release of the EWG report, the state of California took [action](#) to adjust its proposed public health goal of hexavalent chromium in drinking water. You can read more about the Santa Clara Valley Water District's effort on Chromium-6 [here](#)

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