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## Republicans Voting Greener, Environmental Group Says

By Randy Hall

(CNSNews.com) - Republicans in Congress showed a "marked improvement" when voting on environmental issues in 2006 compared to the year before, according to a scorecard released on Monday by a "green" GOP organization.

However, a skeptic of manmade climate change said the rankings show that the group is "for big government, down on the little guy and down on the private property holder."

"We are pleased to report that Republican members of Congress on average had a significantly better environmental voting record" during last year's session, said Martha Marks, president of Republicans for Environmental Protection (REP), in a news release announcing the group's second annual congressional scorecard.

The average score of House Republicans improved from 14 percent in 2005 to 30 percent in 2006, the document states, and the number of Republicans scoring 50 percent or more increased from 27 in 2005 to 39

in 2006.

In the Senate, the GOP average was the same for both years at 13 percent, but in 2006, five senators scored above 50, compared to four in 2005.

The scorecard rated Republican 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 news release indicated

"While one year does not constitute a trend, we are optimistic that the scores reflect real and positive change," said Marks, who called the year-to-year shift a "marked improvement."

"I think more of our GOP leaders are beginning to understand that improving their environmental records will broaden their appeal with voters while embracing the traditionally conservative values of stewardship, efficiency, and protecting the

inheritance of future generations," she added.

According to the document, Rep. Jim Saxton (N.J.) achieved the highest score of 104, earning him the title of "Greenest Republican in Congress."

Saxton edged out six other House Republicans who achieved perfect scores of 100. They were Michael Castle (Del.), Christopher Shays (Conn.), Michael Ferguson and Frank LoBiondo of N.J., and former New York Reps. Sherwood Boehlert and Sue Kelly.

Sen. Olympia Snowe of Maine received a score of 86, the highest in the Senate. Others getting high marks in that chamber were Susan Collins of Maine with 79 percent and former Sen. Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island, who attained a total of 71.

"We are proud of our Republican lawmakers who scored well," Marks stated. "They are courageous environmental champions who are not afraid to stand up to

party leaders and vote their convictions."

Still, far too many Republicans had low scores, the statement said. The lowest scoring member in the House was John Peterson (Pa.), who received a score of minus 4. In the Senate, the low achiever was Pete Domenici, with minus 7. Former Majority Leader and Rep. Tom DeLay (Texas) also was near the bottom, with a 0.

"We hope that low-scoring lawmakers will reflect on their records and rediscover the truly conservative principles that compel conservation and responsible stewardship," said Republicans for Environmental Protection Government Affairs Director David Jenkins..

"Only then will they come more in line with the wishes of rank-and-file Republicans on issues such as climate change and protecting our public lands and wildlife heritage," he added.

David Willett, national press

secretary of the Sierra Club, told Cybercast News Service on Monday that he applauded the GOP's "environmental progress" as reflected in the REP scorecard.

"With broad public support and clear economic benefits to tackling problems like global warming, there's no reason for conservation to be a partisan issue," he said.

**However, H. Sterling Burnett, senior policy analyst with the conservative National Center for Policy Analysis, told Cybercast News Service that the group's rankings show it is for big government and against private property holders.**

**Burnett noted that the REP "says they're for climate change legislation. That apparently means they're for hurting the economy and doing nothing to prevent global warming because there isn't a plan on the table to actually reduce future climate**

**change, but there are a lot that would harm the economy.**

**"They're against salvage logging despite the fact that it's one of the few ways we have of removing dead and dying timber before it goes up in flames," he said. "And they're against allowing Americans to challenge state and federal land-use rules that stem from federal laws in federal court.**

**"In other words, they're telling us, 'never mind that pesky Constitution when it gets in the way of our view of what we should be able to impose on people for the sake of the environment,'" Burnett added.**

**Noting that any group can claim alignment with the GOP, Burnett stated the REP "should consider changing its name from 'Republicans for Environmental Protection' to 'Republican Enemies of Property rights.'"**