

Question from the Democrats: How can Texas Gov. George W. Bush criticize Vice President Al Gore on environmental issues when Texans are fleeing the state because of the worst air quality conditions in the country?

Joe Andrew, Democratic national chairman: Newspapers this week highlighted a number of Houston families, one of which is fleeing Texas, who must live with the worst air quality in the nation. Houston, under Mr. Bush, is the smog capitol of America. Many of the children who live there suffer from asthma and are often not allowed to play outside. Schools had to start monitoring pollution levels after student athletes suffered from coughing fits on high pollution days.

Yet, the only solutions proposed by Mr. Bush's Texas environmental "watchdogs" are lowering speed limits and limiting lawn mowers. This may not be surprising when one considers that many of Mr. Bush's so-called environmental regulators previously worked for the exact same industries that are being regulated, including one who is a lobbyist for chemical companies.

Mr. Bush has a troubling record of favoring powerful oil and chemical interests and leaving the families of Texas to deal with the consequences of filthy air. For instance, Mr. Bush asked polluters to draft voluntary clean air regulations, even though their companies were producing about 900,000 tons of air pollution a year. Those same type of polluters donated \$1.5 million to his gubernatorial campaign. This lack of leadership on Mr. Bush's part resulted in hurt families as only three of 36 companies that promised to voluntarily reduce pollution have kept their promise.

The Bush-Cheney ticket is truly the "Big Oil" ticket. Over the past year, Mr. Bush, a former oil man himself, has taken at least \$1.46 million from the oil and gas industry for his presidential campaign. And "Big Oil" was one of the largest donors to his gubernatorial campaigns.

Dick Cheney's record is no better. Not only did his stock portfolio benefit from higher gas prices this summer, but he also received a \$20 million retirement package from

Nature in the campaign

Haliburton — his oil supply company. Mr. Cheney, showing his ties to the industry, said this week that it "would be silly" not to drill for oil in Alaska's pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

When given the choice of protecting the special interests and big polluters or standing up for families, Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney's actions speak louder than words.

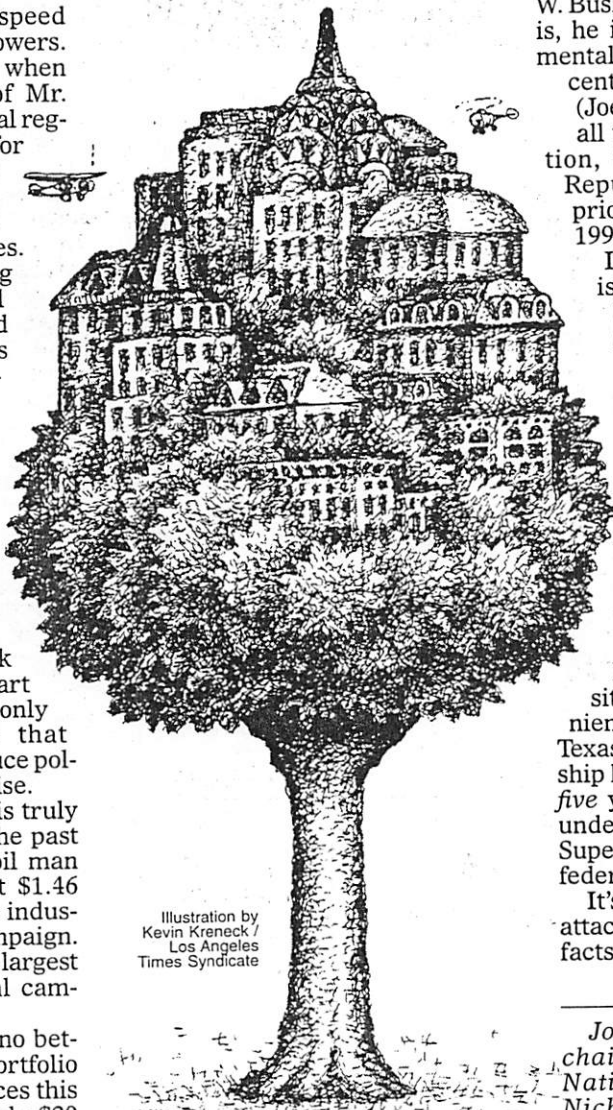


Illustration by Kevin Kraneck / Los Angeles Times Syndicate

We need leaders who put families first. We need Al Gore and Joe Lieberman.

Jim Nicholson, Republican national chairman: Just like Al Gore, Joe never lets a fact or two get in the way of a good political argument.

First off, Texans are not "fleeing the state." Quite the opposite — people are moving into Texas at an astonishing rate — twice the rate of growth of the rest of the country. The net migration into Texas over the last decade has been greater than that in all but two other states.

Secondly, Texas does not have "the worst air quality conditions in the country," according to the most recent Environmental Protection Agency reports.

By just about any measure, environmental quality in Texas has improved markedly since George W. Bush became governor. The fact is, he is cleaning up the environmental mess left by more than a century of Democrat governors.

(Joe knows perfectly well that in all the years since Reconstruction, there has only been one Republican governor in Texas prior to Gov. Bush's election in 1994.)

It is actually amusing that Joe is trashing Texas. After all, back in April, Al Gore himself highlighted Gov. Bush's success in cleaning up Texas. In his much-touted "Earth Day 2000 Report," Mr. Gore commended Texas for being the second-largest contributor to the national reduction in toxic pollution releases.

Mr. Gore even bragged in that report that the Clinton-Gore administration had cleaned up 11 Superfund sites in seven years — conveniently overlooking the fact that Texas under Gov. Bush's leadership has cleaned up 15 sites in just five years. In other words, Texas under Gov. Bush is cleaning up Superfund sites twice as fast as the federal government.

It's not surprising that Joe is attacking, nor is it that he has his facts wrong again.

Joseph Andrew is national chairman of the Democratic National Committee. James Nicholson is chairman of the Republican National Committee.