



New York 2009-2010 Congressional Questionnaire Bill Owens (D-23)

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SECTION ONE: General Questions

Q.1a: The new Administration has vaulted energy, conservation and infrastructure issues to the top of the agenda. The 111th Congress presents tremendous opportunities on a range of environmental, energy and conservation issues that are ripe for congressional action. We consider energy and global warming to be the most urgent as we head into 2009. Please give an indication of your overall view on issues related to energy and global warming.

I applaud the Obama Administrations new commitment to energy conservation and agree that now is the time to take action on a variety of environmental and energy issues in Congress.

Global climate change is an issue we must address in Congress. The United States is in position to lead the world and be on the forefront of a “green” economy. In the 23rd Congressional District, there are many wind farms and renewable fuel facilities which not only preserve the environment but create jobs and stimulate the economy.

Q.1b: Reducing New York State’s dependence on dirty fossil fuels, building a clean and renewable energy future and reducing our contributions to climate change are critical goals for State policy makers. The State government will need to make significant financial commitments in order to support the renewable energy industry in the State and encourage energy efficiency. Please detail how you will work to support New York States energy efficiency initiatives and encourage the development of a renewable energy industry in the State as a member of Congress:

I agree that reducing New York’s dependence on dirty fossil fuels, building a clean and renewable energy future and reducing our contributions to climate change are important goals for state lawmakers. As a member of Congress, I will work regularly with state and local elected officials in the 23rd Congressional District to ensure that these goals are met at the state and/or federal level. Working together, we can solve these problems.

Q.1c: One of the most important steps we can take to reduce our contributions to climate change is to invest in improving and expanding mass transit and the use of rail freight. The downstate New York region is already well served by the largest transit system in the United States. However, this system is in dire need of increased funding. Furthermore, Upstate New York suffers from a lack of adequate transit options that has lead to sprawl and high transportation costs which hamper economic development. As a member of Congress, how would you work to increase support for transit inside your district and statewide?

Transportation and infrastructure concerns are of great concern to residents in the 23rd Congressional District. I support the construction of I-98, a high-speed highway that will allow

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cars and trucks to travel at a more fuel-efficient and consistent rate of speed across northern New York. Right now travelers must travel along a series of lower speed and less direct routes which increase the amount of time in the car and also lead to less fuel-efficient travel.

Additionally, I support the improvement of the rail freight system in upstate New York. Improving this system will not only reduce traffic on the roads, but will expand inter and intra-state commerce and create more jobs.

Q.2: Please give an indication of which environmental or conservation issues other than energy and global warming you would consider most important if elected.

I consider the protection of New York's air, water and recreations parks to be an important issue in the 23rd Congressional District. Living in Plattsburgh, we have access to Lake Champlain and Adirondack State Park. Preserving and protecting these two entities, in addition to countless others in the region is of great priority to me.

Q.3: What accomplishments or experiences would you cite as influences on your approach to environmental or conservation issues? These may be professional or personal.

Living in the North County for the past three decades, I have developed an appreciation for the outdoors. I regularly kayak on Lake Champlain and spend a good amount of my free-time outdoors. This has helped influence my approach to environmental and conservation issues over the years.

Q.4: Would you say environmental or conservation issues are a priority for you when compared to other issues? Do you plan to personally attend to these issues? If so, why, and if not, why not?

Yes, this will be a personal priority of mine in addition to job creation, fiscal responsibility and health care.

Q5: What are you doing to operate a green campaign?

My campaign team is aware of the need to run a green campaign. This not only is the right thing to do from a conservation standpoint, but saves the campaign money. My campaign office regularly recycles paper, aluminum, glass and plastic items. And since the district is quite large and requires a significant amount of driving, I insist that we carpool as much as possible/

Q6: Do you want an LCV endorsement and how would you use it?

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I would be honored to have an LCV endorsement. With LCV's permission, I would send out a media release, put up a notice on my campaign website, and attempt to speak with LCV members living in the 23rd Congressional District.

SECTION TWO: Energy and Global Warming

Q.7: The League of Conservation Voters, together with the rest of the environmental community and much of the country, believe energy and global warming issues represent the most pressing environmental challenges facing this generation's leaders.

Will you support legislation that achieves 15 to 20 % reductions in global warming pollution by 2020 and reductions on the order of 80% by 2050?

Yes: No:

Explanation:

I believe we can develop a comprehensive plan that not only protects the environment and conserves energy but also creates jobs.

Q.8: In March 2001, President Bush withdrew the United States from the Kyoto Protocol, which had been the driving force at the international level for mandatory commitments by countries to reduce their global warming pollution. While the rest of the world community has moved forward to meet their pollution reduction commitments, the lack of leadership and engagement from the U.S. has slowed international momentum for stronger action, and has kept U.S. businesses from participating in the growing international carbon markets created by Kyoto.

Would you support resolutions directing the United States to engage in negotiations for deeper pollution reduction commitments with our international partners and take on commitments to reduce U.S. global warming pollution, focusing on a deal that will achieve the 50% reduction in global emissions that scientists say is needed to avoid the most serious impacts from global warming?

Yes: No:

Explanation:

Reducing pollution is a global issue and I support efforts to engage in negotiations for deeper reduction commitments with our international partners.

Q.9: The US economy is slowing down and many experts fear we are facing or have already entered a recession. Reforming and redeveloping the way we create and use energy in the United States would provide a huge boost to the economy. Studies indicate that investing in renewable

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energies, such as wind and solar, create more jobs than investing in traditional pulverized coal plants. The United States is already among the world leaders in developing new clean energy technologies, however, we simply do not produce it on a large scale domestically. Reinventing our energy economy will create jobs and stimulate our markets providing a much-needed economic boost as well as provide consumers with real energy choices.

Will you support legislation to create incentives for clean, renewable energy sources as well as providing support for the creation of green jobs?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

Absolutely. As mentioned earlier, creating a new “green” economy is one of my top priorities for the 23rd Congressional District. We have the natural resources in the region and a strong work ethic among the workforce who can successfully implement a “green” economy.

Q.10: One of the best ways to reduce America’s dependence on fossil fuels and cut global warming emissions and other forms of air pollution is to increase our use of renewable energy sources, including wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal. More than twenty states have enacted policies requiring that a gradually increasing percentage of the state's electricity come from renewable sources.

Would you support federal legislation to require that at least 25 percent of the nation's electricity come from clean, renewable sources like wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal energy by 2025?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

I support this legislation. As mentioned earlier, the 23rd Congressional District can be a national leader in creating clean, renewable sources of energy.

Q.11: Raising fuel economy standards and addressing vehicle greenhouse emissions directly are key to achieving national global warming goals. The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 set new fuel economy standards for the first time since 1975 - at least 35 mpg in 2020.

Accelerating these standards and setting new standards to achieve 42 mpg in 2020 will be needed. In addition, CA and 14 states have adopted tailpipe greenhouse standards and will be able to implement these standards with a federal waiver. It is critical that we succeed on both fronts - fuel economy and state standards.

Would you support accelerating fuel economy standards and protecting state authority?

Would you support legislation to grant CA the waiver for its greenhouse gas standards?

I support these measures as long as they don’t result in a loss of jobs.

Q.12: After five decades, more than \$85 billion in U.S. federal grants and subsidies, and 100 commercial reactors deployed and operating in the U.S., nuclear power generation is a mature energy technology controlled by multi-billion dollar companies. These companies are fully capable of privately financing new nuclear reactors whenever they can be economically constructed and operated with a suitable return on investment.

Do you favor continued federal government subsidies and tax breaks to these large energy companies, or should the government leave nuclear power to find its own way in the energy marketplace without further subsidies?

I believe nuclear power plays a role in the nation's energy future. I would hope that private industry would take the lead on financing further development. However, in this economy, I would consider modest government subsidies if it were needed to facilitate growth and create jobs.

Q.13: Some are advocating for the development or import of unconventional fuels such as liquid-coal, tar sands and oil shale to generate additional fuels for cars, trucks, and planes here in the United States. However, using these fuels produces nearly twice the global warming pollution compared with fuels we use today -- at a time when most believe we need to be reducing the emissions that even current fuels produce.

Do you support investment in unconventional fuels, such as liquid coal, tar sands and oil shale, which could reduce foreign oil imports but at the same time dramatically increase global warming pollution compared with the fuels we use today?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

I would examine this on a case-by-case basis. Reducing our dependence on foreign oil imports and reducing global warming pollution are both important issues.

Q.14: More than 100 new coal fired power plants are being planned in the United States. It is important that all new investments in power plants and other long-lived assets use the most advanced technology available, rather than lock in decades of excessive pollution. To accomplish this, new plants could be required to meet a strong environmental performance standard of near zero emissions for conventional and global warming pollutants.

Would you support legislation that requires new power plants to achieve a strong environmental performance standard of "near zero emissions"?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

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I support increasing environmental performance standards on new power plants as long as they don't result in a loss of jobs.

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SECTION THREE: Public Health

Q.15: More than 150 million Americans still live in areas that exceed the U.S. EPA's health standards for particulate air pollution and smog. These pollutants impose a significant burden on public health, causing premature death, heart attacks, hospitalizations, asthma attacks, and lost productivity at work and school, especially with poor people and people of color. Yet, recent research shows that current health standards for particulates and smog must be substantially tightened in order to adequately protect the public from these health hazards.

Would you support legislation to substantially tighten federal health standards for particulate air pollution and smog to assure protection of public health and the environment?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

Yes, we need to restore clean air protections that were eroded by the Bush Administration.

Q.16: According to EPA, nearly 70 million Americans, including 10 million children, live within four miles of a Superfund toxic waste site. The federal Superfund law's liability provisions and its "polluter pays" fees have allowed federal agencies to respond to thousands of hazardous material emergencies and clean up many of the nation's most serious contamination cases. In 1995, however, authority for the "polluter pays" fees expired, and since then the Superfund Trust Fund, the backbone of the cleanup effort, has been virtually depleted. Cleanup costs have shifted from industry to the general taxpayer, funding has dropped, and the pace of cleanup has slowed dramatically.

Do you support congressional action to reinstate the Superfund "polluter pays" program?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

Innocent taxpayers should not be forced to pay to clean up toxic waste sites caused by negligent companies.

Q.17: Since September 11th, security experts have agreed that the thousands of industrial facilities that use or store toxic chemicals provide a target for terrorists, or as one expert called them, "pre-positioned weapons of mass destruction." In 2006, the House Homeland Security Committee passed a comprehensive chemical security bill, H.R. 5695. The bill would have required the most high-risk facilities to switch to safer materials unless their operators could

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show that costs were prohibitive or that safer technologies did not exist. Facilities would also be required to create security plans that would be tested in a similar manner to the drills conducted with nuclear plants. This legislation was set aside by Congressional leadership in favor of much weaker language.

Q: Would you support new comprehensive chemical security legislation modeled after H.R. 5695?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

We must do all we can to prevent another terrorist attack on U.S. soil.

Q.18: The Clean Water Act has been the foundation of the nation's clean water protections for the last 35 years, protecting rivers, streams, lakes and ponds from pollution and destruction. Small rivers, intermittent streams, and so-called "isolated" wetlands play a crucial role in maintaining water quality. Efforts are underway in the current administration and the courts to limit the ability of the federal government to protect these resources, which account for up to 60% of the nation's waters.

Would you support legislation to reaffirm the historic scope of the Clean Water Act to protect the nation's waters, including these intermittent streams and isolated wetlands?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

I support strengthening the Clean Water Act as long as it doesn't unreasonably impact responsible development.

Q.19: Some communities in America, especially communities of color and poorer communities, suffer disproportionate impacts from environmental degradation. Evidence of environmental disparities includes: higher incidences of childhood lead poisoning among African-American and lower-income children; higher exposures to air pollution in people of color; higher penalties for violations of federal environmental laws levied in white communities compared to minority communities and many others.

Would you support legislation to strengthen compliance with Executive Order 12898, the President's Order on Environmental Justice (2/11/94), which mandates that each federal agency make achieving environmental justice part of its mission, by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low income populations?

Yes, I support this idea.

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SECTION FOUR: Natural Heritage

Q.20: Ocean-related activities directly contribute more than \$117 billion to American prosperity and support well over two million jobs. Yet, two recent blue-ribbon commissions have detailed declines in ocean health ranging from depleted fish populations to the detrimental impacts of climate change on ocean productivity. Both commissions called for a fundamental shift in how the federal government manages America's oceans from a single-species approach to a more comprehensive approach known as ecosystem-based management.

Do you support management of America's oceans that will fully protect and restore the health of marine eco-systems, even if it may result in short term economic hardship?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

While I support protecting and restoring the health of marine eco-systems, I believe we need to find a way to do it without causing short or long-term economic hardship. As part of that, I would work to find a way to fairly compensate those who are adversely affected.

Q.21: In 1982, the perils associated with oil and gas development along the country's outer continental shelf prompted Congress to create the first offshore oil and gas drilling moratorium. In 1991, former President George H. W. Bush instituted a separate set of executive deferrals on new coastal drilling, which President Bill Clinton extended through 2012 to protect sensitive areas off the Atlantic, Pacific, and eastern Gulf coasts while also including executive protection for Alaska's fishery-rich Bristol Bay - until it was removed last year by the White House. In 2006, for the first time in more than twenty-five years, Congress voted to allow offshore oil and gas drilling in 500,000 acres of previously protected waters off of Florida's Gulf Coast in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. And in April 2007, the Bush administration's Department of the Interior released its 5-year plan for offshore oil and gas drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf, calling for drilling in Alaska's Bristol Bay, the fragile Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, and, for the first time, off the Virginia coast.

Do you support maintaining the current moratorium on new offshore oil and natural gas drilling and expanding it to include sensitive areas along Alaska's coasts?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

I support maintaining the current moratorium.

Q.22: For more than 30 years, the Endangered Species Act has helped prevent the extinction of our nation's wildlife treasures, including the bald eagle, the Florida manatee, and the California

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condor. But despite the Act's outstanding success, there have been numerous attempts in recent years to significantly weaken it both administratively and legislatively. These include proposals to weaken habitat protection, make it more difficult to add species, undermine scientific decision-making, weaken oversight of federal agency actions, remove or undermine the goal of recovering listed species, and write into law monetary compensation for developers who claim their property has been "taken" by the act's protections.

Do you support maintaining the strong protections of the Endangered Species Act, and do you think the Act is fundamentally sound?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

I support maintaining the strong protections of the Endangered Species Act.

Q.23: The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is our nation's largest refuge and the only untouched Arctic ecosystem in the United States. It is home to the calving grounds of the migratory Porcupine caribou herd. It is also the most important land denning habitat for the imperiled polar bear and over 135 different species of migratory birds. Existing law requires an act of Congress before oil and gas exploration or development could proceed in the refuge. Conservationists advocate its designation as wilderness so as to ensure its permanent protection for future generations.

Do you support legislation to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from repeated attempts at oil and gas development by permanently designating it as wilderness?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

I am opposed to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Q.24: In recent years, policies and procedures have been implemented that bypass environmental reviews in order to give extractive industries greater access to public lands, including national forests. In 2005, the widely popular Roadless Area Conservation Rule was repealed and briefly replaced by a weaker state-by-state petition process. The courts have since reinstated the 2001 Roadless Rule.

Would you support legislation to codify the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, allowing some of our last substantially untouched public lands to remain intact for future generations?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

I support the protection of national forests and public lands.

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Q.25: Passed 135 years ago, the 1872 Mining Law still governs hardrock mining on public lands, even though the mining industry has greatly changed. The law allows private companies to take valuable minerals, including gold, silver, and uranium, from public lands without payment to the taxpayers and without consideration for the environment, which has led to pollution in 40% of the headwaters of all western watersheds. Federal land management agencies have consistently argued that, because of the law, they cannot deny hardrock mining proposals regardless of the potential environmental impacts.

Would you support reforming the 1872 Mining law in a way that safeguards water resources, gives a fair return to the taxpayer, and allows land managers to balance mining equally against other potential uses of public lands?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

I support reforming this law so that it safeguards water resources and gives a fair return to taxpayers.

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SECTION FIVE: Adequate Funding

Q.26: The Land and Water Conservation Fund, established in 1964, is one of our nation's best tools to address the increasing loss of open space, forests, and wildlife habitat. It provides funding for acquisition of lands for our national wildlife refuges, parks, forests, monuments, and recreation areas. It also provides matching funds for state purchase of open space and development of parks. The Fund is authorized to receive \$900 million annually in dedicated funding from receipts from oil and gas drilling off of the outer continental shelf of the U.S. But, past congresses and administrations from both parties have failed to appropriate the full \$900 million annually, diverting most of the money to the general fund of the federal treasury.

Do you support fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

I support fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund as long as it doesn't result in a tax increase.

Q.27: From Acadia to Yosemite, America's 390 national parks protect and interpret some of the nation's most treasured natural and cultural resources. Unfortunately, the National Park System has an annual operating deficit in excess of \$800 million, a land acquisition shortfall of \$1.9 billion, and a multi-billion dollar maintenance backlog. The National Park Service will celebrate its centennial in 2016, less than ten years from now, and the American people are united around

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the idea of fully addressing the needs of the National Park System in time to celebrate the Centennial.

Do you support reinvesting in our national parks through a sustained effort over the next ten years to establish reliable sources of funding and eliminate the National Park Service funding shortfall?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

I support reinvesting in our national parks as long as it doesn't result in a tax increase.

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SECTION SIX: Environment In a Larger Context

Q.28: Many recent international trade agreements do not include strong and enforceable environmental standards to combat problems such as trade in illegally logged timber, nor do they require countries to enforce their obligations under international environmental treaties. Multinational companies can also use them to challenge state and federal environmental and public health laws before international tribunals. Since "fast track" authority does not allow for amendments or real debate, congressional attempts to correct environmental deficiencies have failed.

Would you oppose trade agreements that do NOT include the following: Binding requirements for compliance with environmental laws and environmental treaties, a prohibition on trade in illegally logged timber, provisions to ensure trade agreements do not undermine our own environmental laws, and greater congressional involvement in developing our trade policy?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

I support fair trade agreements that protect both workers rights and the environment.

Q.29: The states have long been the laboratories for innovative environmental and public health policy, often enacting protections that are stronger than those provided by federal law or filling gaps where protections do not exist. In recent years, states have enacted tougher laws on global warming-causing pollution from automobiles, for example.

Would you oppose legislation that pre-empts states from enacting these kinds of environmental and public health standards that are more protective than federal standards?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

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I support allowing individual states to enact tougher environmental laws as long as it doesn't result in a loss of jobs.

Q.30: World population is increasing by 78 million people per year. Continued population growth aggravates virtually every environmental problem, including deforestation, extinction of species through habitat loss, land degradation, climate change, air and water pollution, and freshwater scarcity. Through its assistance for family planning services, the U.S. government has contributed significantly to the fertility decline that has occurred in developing countries since the 1960s. By law, no U.S. foreign assistance funds may be used to provide abortion services.

Do you support increasing funding for population and family planning to \$1 billion annually in order to provide the U.S. fair share of the financial resources necessary to meet the unmet need for contraception of more than 200 million women in developing countries (who seek to postpone childbearing, space births, or want no more children but are not using a modern method of contraception)?

Yes:

No:

Explanation:

I oppose the "Mexico City" policy.

Q.31: The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides federal agencies with clear statutory direction to incorporate environmental values into their decision-making. NEPA requires federal agencies to disclose publicly the environmental consequences of projects before taking steps that may significantly affect the quality of the human environment. It has helped ensure that public resources are managed, and public funds are spent, through a public process. Critics of NEPA say it impedes development and costs too much money and time.

Do you support NEPA as is, and what, if any, changes to NEPA would you support?

I believe NEPA is an important law.