

Group announces politicians' grades on environmental issues

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The U.S. House and Senate delegations from Illinois earned above-average grades in the 2002 Environmental Scorecard recently released by the League of Conservation Voters.

The ratings are based on how representatives and senators cast votes on a series of environmental issues. They ranged from a failed bill to halt federal funds from subsidizing factory farms to the successful bid to stop arctic oil drilling to an exemption for pickup trucks from future fuel economy standards, which was defeated.

Others included a requirement that 20 percent of electricity come from renewable sources by 2020, which failed, to the vote to create a central storage facility for nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain, which passed.

The release of the scorecard is timed to help environmentally-friendly legislators in Tuesday's election.

Nationally, the average score in the House was 47 percent. Average score in the Senate was 43 percent.

In Illinois, Sen. Dick Durbin, a Democrat running for re-election, scored 92 percent. That compares to an average 62 percent for other freshman senators. Sen. Peter Fitzgerald, a Republican who is also a freshman, scored 52 percent.

Scores achieved by the Republicans representing the Pantagraph area in the House were:

. Timothy Johnson, 50 percent. The LCV previously endorsed Johnson for re-election, calling him a "leader in protecting drinking water and promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy." Johnson also voted against President Bush on the Energy Bill because it contained a provision to allow oil drilling in the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge. The LVC said average score among freshmen House members like Johnson was 35 percent;

. Ray LaHood, 36 percent;

. Jerry Weller, 18 percent.

U.S. Rep. Rod Blagojevich, the Democratic candidate for Illinois governor, scored a 77 percent.

Other Illinois representatives and their ratings were Democrats Bobby Rush, 64 percent; Jesse Jackson Jr., 100 percent; William Lipinski 36 percent; Luis Gutierrez, 86 percent; Danny Davis, 91 percent; Jan Schakowsky, 100 percent; Jerry Costello, 59 percent; Lane Evans, 86 percent; and David Phelps, 45 percent. Republican representatives and their scores were Henry Hyde, 14 percent; Phil Crane, 5 percent; Mark Kirk, 59 percent; Judy Biggert, 59 percent; Donald Manzullo, 9 percent; and John Shimkus, a zero.

Congressional delegations from Vermont led the way for all states with an overall score of 95 percent in the House and an 86 percent score in the Senate. Kentucky and Oklahoma scored lowest.