Let’s Get Political in 2010!

Among all the conservation organizations in South Carolina, what makes Conservation Voters special? We play an unparalleled role where it matters most: in elections.

Your generous contribution will help our bi-partisan Political Action Committee support pro-conservation candidates. When the race is close, we can make the difference. When a conservation supporter grooms up against a special interest enemy, we can make the difference. Where the rubber hits the road, we can make the difference.

Our Board carefully vets candidates’ credibility, strengths and conservation records before making endorsement decisions. Our strength lies in our ability to pool the resources of conservation-minded voters from all over the state. By working together, we can make our voice even stronger.

These are challenging times, but if you want a healthy, sustainable future for South Carolina, donating to the “CVSC Political Action Committee” offers the best return on your investment. You can contribute up to $3,500 per individual, or $7,000 per couple.

Let’s Elect a Green Governor in 2010

As we enter a new decade, Conservation Voters of South Carolina is undertaking a bold campaign to bring accountability to our state’s highest elected office. This year’s gubernatorial races are the first openly contested elections since 1994.

We have a great chance to elect a truly “green” governor for South Carolina!

How will we do it? Working with one of the best web companies in the state, CyberWorks, CVSC has designed a website that allows you, the voter, to interact directly with the candidates! Just go to www.scgreengov.com to learn how.

This cutting edge website allows you to post questions directly online to specific candidates and sign a “green pledge” to vote green. We are encouraging all the candidates to define their positions on important conservation issues through interactive profile pages. And our issues pages are designed to educate both the public and the media about the vital issues facing our state.

How serious are we about making our homes more energy efficient? About making locally grown and healthy foods available in our schools and markets? About keeping northern trout out of our rural communities? About protecting the water in our rivers and reducing dangerous toxins in our fish? Our next governor needs to offer, and fight for, the right answers.

By participating in the www.scgreengov website, you can help frame the debate. We have a great chance to elect a truly “green” governor for South Carolina!

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**ADVANCING OUR COMMON AGENDA**

**IN 2010**

Thanks to all our great volunteer activists who have made such a difference at the State House. Despite the budget crisis we are working hard to advance the Common Agenda. If you’d like to learn more, or find out how to get involved, please visit our website and click on the links to “Advocacy and Education” and “Volunteer Lab-by Team.” We can’t do it without you!

**WATER PROTECTION BILL FLOWS FORWARD:**

The “Fair Share Water Bill” S.452, has been voted out of Committee with a favorable report and now waits on full Senate action! This critical bill calls for a system of permits to determine how much water can be withdrawn from our rivers by users like industries and power plants. Without this bill, there is no limit on the amount of water big users can take. S.452 is key for developing an comprehensive water management strategy for our state. Our volunteer lobby teams have been vital to promoting S.452. You can be part of these teams that make conservation issues a legislative priority. You do not have to be an expert! For more information, visit the advocacy page at http://www.conservationvotersofsc.org.

**A CHANCE TO SAVE CONSERVATION BILL FROM THE “DEATH CLAUSE”**

Legislation has been introduced (H.4448 / S.452) that calls for enacting the “death clause” that nearly wiped out the Conservation Bank last year. The Conservation Bank is critically important for our state because it provides funding to buy conservation easements to offset out of control urban development. Last year’s economic downturn triggered a “death clause” that nearly eliminated the Bank’s entire funding. A last minute appropriation pulled the Conservation Bank back from the brink, but the threat remains. Lobby teams can help here too by emphasizing the importance of the Conservation Bank to our state’s future. Get involved! Contact Debbie Parker (803) 799-0716 or Debbie@conservationvotersofsc.org.

**A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE ENERGY AND CREATE JOBS!**

Both the House and Senate are considering important legislation (H.4448 / S.1096) that would allow electric and natural gas providers to offer financing to their customers for energy efficiency upgrades, including the purchase and installation of insulation, water heaters and more efficient heating and cooling systems. Homeowners would see an immediate savings on their utility bills even as they repay the loans over time. Congratulations to the SC Electric Coops for spearheading this effort!

Keep up with these and other conservation issues by subscribing to our weekly “newsletter” that tracks the progress of conservation issues in the legislature. You can sign up at www.conservacionvotersofsc.org/newsletter.html.

**SUSTAINING THE MIDLANDS**

For too long, our diverse conservation community in the Midlands has lacked a means of organizing around our shared goals. Thanks to Sustainable Midlands, that has changed. Our coalition, now 15 members strong, has quickly become a recognized name in the community.

We have held several events at 701 Whaley involving hundreds of participants and community leaders. Over 400 people participated in our “Stewardship Challenge,” celebration on November 30, 2009, held in the grand ballroom at 701 Whaley. Attendees came to celebrate the concept of sustainability and were able to support over 30 art vendors specializing in sustainable food, arts and crafts.

In February we held a mayoral candidate forum. Seven candidates taking the top job in Columbia outlined their positions on a range of conservation issues to over 100 attendees.

Improving the water quality of our rivers is a key mission of Sustainable Midlands. Our efforts to promote reasonable streamwater management have been well received by both the City of Columbia and Richland County. Successful meetings and agreements with both will give us an opportunity to help protect our water resources in Columbia.

We would love for you to join us at future programs and events. You can learn more at our website: sustainablemidlands.org.

**GRAMHAM FIGHTS FOR ENERGY INDEPENDENCE**

Despite the gridlock and partisan bickering in Washington, one leader has emerged on comprehensive climate and energy legislation and he is South Carolina’s own Senator Lindsey Graham. As Senator Graham has explained, where we are on the climate debate, we can all agree that reducing our dependence on foreign oil is good for our troops, and embracing a clean energy future is good for our economy and the environment.

How is South Carolina responding? The support has been tremendous. Members of the faith and military community have publicly thanked Senator Lindsey Graham for his leadership.

What remains? A final bill. Senator Graham, and our entire federal delegation, needs to hear from us. The best way to enhance our national security and create jobs in South Carolina would be to pass a strong climate and energy bill. Want to get involved? Contact our office to learn more.

Over 20 South Carolina faith, military and business leaders met with Senator Lindsey Graham’s staff in Washington DC to push for climate and energy legislation.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2009 Green Tie Award Winners!**

Attendees enjoyed an array of local food featuring Manchester Farms Quail, Bowen’s Island Shrimp, Adliss Gitis, and Certified SC vegetables all cooked to perfection by Spotted Salamander Catering. This year’s menu was undoubtedly amazing.

We are expecting the 2010 Green Tie Luncheon to be bigger, better and greener! And we hope you will consider participating in this year’s event either as a sponsor, attendee, or volunteer.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**Why is CVSC spending time in these new alliances?**

Because as Ronald Reagan once said, “That person who agrees with you 80 percent of the time is a friend and ally; not a 20 percent traitor.”

Because we facilitate the Common Agenda process and you can help South Carolina. CVSC is ideally suited to forge relationships with “nontraditional” allies. Our “Green Tie Luncheons” brought together hundreds of conservation, business and political leaders to celebrate the achievements of our champions in the General Assembly.

These collaborations will only strengthen our mission to make common sense conservation values top priorities for South Carolina’s elected leaders, political candidates, and voters.

Indeed, this month we launched the www.scgreengov.com website to engage all South Carolinians in our effort to elect a “green governor” in 2010.

As we consider how to protect clean air and water, plan for future growth, and create a new energy future, we are learning to think bigger and better. We need help from families who can’t pay their heating bills and also create new jobs. We can promote more locally grown food and also protect prime farmland and forest land.

Too often in the past, conservationists have had the right answers but not enough diverse voices to pass pro-active legislation. Here at Conservation Voters we are finding that when we focus on core values we have common ground with new allies for creating a clean, healthy, sustainable South Carolina.

Won’t you join us?

Ann Timberlake is Executive Director of Conservation Voters.

Email her at ann@conservationvotersofsc.org.

**SAVE THE DATE**

**FOR THE 2010 Green Tie Luncheon**

**Wednesday, September 15, 2010**

701 Whaley Street – Columbia, SC

Tickets will go on sale later this year and sponsorship information is available by contacting Bruce Lawrence at 803-799-0716 or bruce@conservationvotersofsc.org.

Debbie Parker is Program Director for Conservation Voters of South Carolina.

Debbie Parker and volunteers plant tree at the State House for heat, abundant shade.

Ann Timberlake is Executive Director of Conservation Voters.

Email her at ann@conservationvotersofsc.org.