



Date: July 8, 2004
To: LCV Education Fund
From: Anna Greenberg and Mike Bocian

RE: New Mexico Focus Group Memo

LCV Education Fund Focus groups in New Mexico among key audiences identified through the Environmental Voter Profiles Program (SmarTargeting) were encouraging and offer important guidance in communicating with these potential activists about the environment and increasing their civic engagement. The differences among the groups that were observed – Anglo men, Anglo women, and Hispanics – were striking. We start with a brief overview of these different groups, followed by key findings, and lastly some recommendations to guide the LCV Education Fund’s communication plans. These findings are based on focus groups conducted by Greenberg, Quinlan, Rosner Research, Inc. (GQR) for the LCV Education Fund on June 23-24 in Albuquerque among people identified in the “top decile”¹ of SmarTargeting:

1. *Anglo Women.* Most encouraging was the focus group among Anglo women. These women displayed tremendous environmental proclivities and they present a ripe audience for the LCV Education Fund. They were wholehearted environmentalists with a great deal of knowledge about environmental issues and displayed tendencies to support strong environmental policies.
2. *Anglo Men.* While not the stereotypical highly educated environmentalists, these men exhibited environmental tendencies and had significant knowledge about nature and the environment. But they were also disaffected, discontent with both political parties and politicians, angry at powerful corporations, and in some cases, questioning the value of voting. This group also presents a huge opportunity for the LCV Education Fund, and is a group that may not otherwise have been selected using traditional targeting.

¹ All registrants are ranked on an environmental scale, which is divided into ten equal parts. Each part is labeled as a decile, and the top decile represents the top of the model or the most likely to be environmental activists.



3. *Hispanics.* Hispanics, even those identified through SmarTargeting as top tier environmentalists, come to the table less engaged on environmental issues. They have far less knowledge about environmental issues and require more education, but the outdoors is an essential part of their culture in New Mexico and they present important opportunities for the LCV Education Fund, but communications must be different, significantly less technical, and tailored to the audience.

Key Findings:

- **Downbeat national mood.** Similar to other focus groups GQR has conducted in New Mexico and across the country, these participants expressed real angst about the direction of the country. Participants varied from uncomfortable and worried to angry, but the mood was clearly downbeat. Iraq, terrorism and the economy are the dominant issues and participants have lost faith in the war effort, seeking more focus on issues here at home. On the economy, these participants show no sign that they are feeling an economy on the rise.
- **Importance of the environment to New Mexico's way of life.** The natural environment is clearly one of the most important aspects of New Mexican life for these participants. The clean air, mountains, forests and desert are among the first things that come up when they think about what makes New Mexico special to them. They have a real sense that our country's environmental treasures are being lost and New Mexico is one of the few states that still has some of the most pristine, undeveloped lands.
- **Environment vs. economy tradeoff not very resonant.** There is little sense that too much environmental regulation is hurting New Mexico's economy or resulting in job losses. This sense of over-regulation that was quite prevalent 5-10 years ago has subsided, as high profile corporate scandals and overseas tax shelters have led people to believe that the greedy companies are to blame for jobs being sent elsewhere, not over-regulation. This does not mean that LCV Education Fund should try to make oil companies the enemy in New Mexico, which would be a mistake, but it does suggest that the economic climate will not limit LCV Education Fund's ability to make the case on the environment.
- **Water is the dominant environmental problem in New Mexico.** As GQR has seen over the last several years, water is the dominant environmental problem for New Mexicans and, indeed, one of the biggest overall problems they face. But LCV Education Fund's communications must recognize the context here – water shortages. If LCV Education Fund speaks about water contamination without recognizing the broader water shortage, it will be out of step with the concerns of New Mexicans. GQR strongly recommends that LCV Education Fund revise its mail pieces on water to make the case



that given New Mexico's shortage of water, we need to protect the water that we have, and then go on to show how current policies put New Mexico's water at risk.

- The mercury issue has some appeal, particularly to women, but GQR would not recommend LCV Education Fund resting its case too heavily on this issue. New Mexicans do not typically eat fish from their state's waters, so it becomes difficult to make the case on mercury. The issue can work, to a limited extent, with younger women, but GQR would not hang our hat on this issue.
- Instead, GQR suggests highlighting some of the drinking water issues.
- **Skepticism about environmental groups.** The level of knowledge about environmental groups among these SmartTargeting audiences far surpassed what GQR ordinarily sees in focus groups here in New Mexico or elsewhere in the country. Participants could name 7-8 environmental groups, including some national and local groups. However, participants expressed a clear perception that environmental groups are often too extreme. This negative perception was tempered with the belief that environmental groups are a necessary watchdog. Nevertheless, the skepticism about the messenger makes it all the more important that LCV Education Fund's communications deliver a message, but do so in a way that is not overly rhetorical or unbalanced.
- **Enamored with clean energy sources such as wind and solar power.** Participants truly believe that we can and should use renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power. These are not viewed as radical environmental ideas, but as common sense solutions. A few important notes. First, GQR has learned over the years that it is critical to name the energy sources. People do not know what renewable or alternative energy means unless we say wind, solar, etc. Second, there is an opportunity to link these clean energy sources with a national patriotic mood by arguing that America has the technological know-how to reduce our reliance on Middle East oil by investing in wind and solar power and making cars more efficient.

Recommendations:

- ∅ **Define environmental issues around two central themes – way of life and health.** Given the massive amount of communications New Mexicans will receive, driving home a message requires that LCV Education Fund reinforce a single theme, along with the motivation (discussed below). As noted earlier, New Mexicans see the environment as a critical part of their way of life. LCV Education Fund needs to deliver a message that New Mexico's way of life is being threatened. Among men and Hispanics, this theme is particularly powerful. Among women, the health message is also powerful and LCV Education Fund should consider targeting health-based messages to Anglo women and way of life messages to Anglo men and Hispanics.



- ∅ **Motivation – siding with corporate polluters instead of ordinary folks.** It is also clear that LCV Education Fund needs to provide a reason why elected officials are putting New Mexico’s way of life and the health of its people at risk. The depth of anti-corporate sentiment was particularly clear among the Anglo men, but LCV Education Fund needs to provide the motivation for why elected officials are weakening environmental protections to Anglo women and Hispanics as well.

- ∅ **Issues – water, land and polluters pay.**
 - Clearly, water is the dominant environmental issue in New Mexico and one that must be central to LCV Education Fund’s communications. GQR noted above our suggestions for how to tweak the water pieces, including putting the issue in the larger context of water shortages and looking for drinking water problems because of mercury’s limited resonance in New Mexico. The water glass piece was the piece that the most people opened and it received the highest scores – this is an excellent concept and we believe that it can be made even stronger with these changes and those discussed below.

 - Land is also an important issue in the sense that New Mexicans recognize that they are one of the few states that still has beautiful, undeveloped land. Without making oil companies the enemy, LCV Education Fund should develop a piece that is focused on protecting the last great wilderness areas that are being threatened – Otero Mesa and Valle Vidal. While not well known, they can be part of this story if positioned as some of New Mexico’s great wilderness areas that are under threat.

 - Lastly, GQR would recommend developing a piece on polluters pay – Albuquerque has superfund sites in the South Valley and this is an issue that appeals beyond the environment, as LCV Education Fund can make the case that taxpayers will have to pay for the cleanup of these sites because current policies have shifted the burden away from the corporate polluters.

- ∅ **Localize every piece.** GQR cannot overstate the importance of localizing every mail piece that the LCV Education Fund develops. The images that appealed to people were ones that clearly spoke to them as New Mexicans – images that look like New Mexico or clearly concern a New Mexico issue. The same thing applies to the copy – the two mail pieces that the most people said they would open right away were the only two pieces that referred to New Mexico on the cover. These two pieces – the one with the glass of water that says “Warning: What families need to know about water quality in New Mexico” and the small piece “Why New Mexico Children are Getting Sick” have other



positive attributes, but it is no coincidence that they were the two pieces most frequently opened and the only two pieces that say New Mexico on the cover.

- ∅ **More thematic and image-based, less text.** While LCV Education Fund clearly needs the substantive evidence that supports its case, it will want to make its mail pieces more thematic-driven, even among audiences with high environmental awareness. Several of the concepts tested here are very good and appealing to people, but LCV Education Fund can make them more resonant by reducing some of the technical language and explanations.
- ∅ **Include footnotes and a website address.** Participants are looking for some validation that the information presented is factual and including footnotes and a website address helps achieve this crucial task. People are unlikely to read the footnotes or visit the website, but their presence is re-assuring.
- ∅ **Don't over-reach or tell half the story.** Given the skepticism of environmental groups as the messenger, LCV Education Fund needs to be careful and avoid giving people a reason to suspect that the information is lopsided or inaccurate. There were a number of occasions in which participants found one small thing dubious and rejected a whole piece as a result. In one case, for instance, participants picked up on the \$30,000 tax break for people who buy SUVs and concluded that since they do not know anyone who received this write-off, it must be for businesses, which put a cloud over the piece and raised the question about whether it was inaccurate.

BEST TESTING MAIL PIECES	
<i>Most Likely to Read</i>	<i>Best Scores</i>
Top Tier	Top Tier
Water Glass – What families need to know about water quality in New Mexico Why New Mexico Children are Getting Sick (Small piece)	Water Glass – What families need to know about water quality in New Mexico Why New Mexico Children are Getting Sick (Small piece)
Second Tier	Second Tier
America Calls it Home 1 in 12 Women	Jihad 1 in 12 Women America Calls it Home

*Among Hispanics, the Hispanics centered piece Roots (Green piece) was ranked at the top with Why New Mexico Children are Getting Sick.

**The headlines piece and the littering piece were the ones most likely to get thrown away.