



2. ADVERTISING: Viewers say Gore's 'can-do' ad campaign clicks (04/04/2008)

Debra Kahn, *ClimateWire* reporter

A \$300 million drumroll, please ... for former Vice President Al Gore's new line of commercials designed to tilt public opinion on climate change in a more optimistic direction, while avoiding specific recommendations on solutions.

The Alliance for Climate Protection's first [ad](#), which debuted Monday to a flood of publicity, features actor William H. Macy narrating over upbeat music: "We didn't wait for someone else to storm the beaches at Normandy. We didn't wait for someone else to guarantee civil rights, or put a man on the moon. And we can't wait for someone else to solve the global climate crisis."

While most pleas for legislative action on climate change are seen only by wonks on subscription-based policy Web sites, Gore's ad is running on major broadcast shows like *American Idol*, the *Today Show* and *Good Morning America*, as well as online. The \$300 million price tag for the entire three years the campaign is supposed to last is also novel, according to ad creator The Martin Agency.

Reaching beyond the wonks

Matt Williams, who worked on the campaign for the Richmond-based ad agency, said the ad's tone would make people feel "optimistic and forward-looking." While clients like UPS and Hanes have spent more, this campaign is the first environmentally themed one in its price bracket, he said.

While the ads aim to raise public consciousness of the potential to fix climate change, they will stop short of recommending a specific legislative vehicle, ACP Chief Executive Officer Cathy Zoi said in an [interview](#) with *E&ETV*.



Cathy Zoi, from an April 1, 2008, episode of E&ETV's OnPoint.

"The scientists tell us we don't have much time to act. We need to get onto it. But the good news is we've got abundant technologies that are within our reach that we simply need to ramp up. And that, if we can get the majority of the American people understanding that, will probably let the folks inside Washington fight about the particulars about how to get it done," she said. "At this point, as I say, we have a high level of awareness, but a really low understanding of both of those, the urgency and solvability issues. So, our focus is going to be more on that education piece and let you guys worry about the particulars of the ins and outs of the policies."

... And going after the 'influencers'

University of Michigan business economics professor Tom Lyon said he thought the campaign was correct to stay away from recommending a specific solution. "If you ask people to step up and take action, that's great. The more specific you get -- 'Sign up for a carbon tax now!' or 'Sign up for a global treaty!' -- as soon as you start doing that, people start fracturing," he said. "In some ways it's more important that we demand action, rather than make a decision about which climate architecture is optimal."

Ed Maibach, director of George Mason University's Center of Excellence in Climate Change Communication Research, said Gore's campaign was hitting the right notes in today's fragmented society.

"From what I understand of their strategy, they're targeting influencers," as particularly well-connected, communicative people are known in the advertising business. Gore's other climate nonprofit, the Climate Project, "did a very nice job of identifying the few who can influence the many." Gore used hundreds of volunteers to spread his message in schools and other organizations and screen his "Inconvenient Truth" documentary. Still, **Maibach** said, "no one has ever tried to implement an influencer strategy nationwide, with the entire U.S. population as the target audience."

Ads by conservative groups

targeting global warming legislation have used a humorous approach. That's not a tactic readily available to groups trying to rouse support for the cause, **Maibach**

said. "It's easier to rally people to oppose an idea than to support a new idea," he said. "The opposition on this issue I think has the easier job. The Alliance's inaugural ad does a nice job of using positive emotion as opposed to negative emotion; so much of the public communication on climate change has been fear-based. The Alliance ad takes a different approach, very consistent with how they're presenting their message: that this is a solvable problem and the country has done some remarkable things in the past."

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