

## Go Figure: Environmental Messages on Billboards

By: Ken Klein

EVP, Government Affairs OAAA

January 21, 2016



*"Don't build roadblocks out of assumptions."*

– Lorii Myers, Targeting Success, Develop the Right Business Attitude to be Successful in the Workplace

*"The explanation requiring the fewest assumptions is most likely to be correct."*

– William of Ockham

*"Your assumptions are your windows on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while, or the light won't come in."*

– Isaac Asimov

Self-help gurus, theologians, and Russian authors all take aim at assumption as an invitation to error.

A common assumption that proves their point is the lament that environmentalism and billboards don't mix.

On the contrary, environmental messages appear on out of home formats from billboards to buses coast to coast . . . and in between.

Take a look at political battleground Iowa (presidential caucuses occur February 1). The Nextgen Climate Action Committee spent more than \$100,000 to post at least a dozen messages on digital billboards, such as "Support Iowa's Clean Energy Workers," and "Happy Earth Day." Nextgen Climate Action is a San Francisco-based environmental advocacy organization supported by hedge fund manager Tom Steyer.



Nextgen Climate Action is a San Francisco-based environmental advocacy organization supported by hedge fund manager Tom Steyer.

*Are your assumptions holding up?*

Iowa native John Friedrich has 25 years in the environmental movement (Clear Water Action, League to Save Lake Tahoe, and Yosemite Conservancy). His group Climate Parents used digital billboards in Iowa to reach candidates with this message: "Candidates, Clean Energy = Healthy Kid".



Sierra Club's long-running campaign against coal has appears in multiple out of home formats, including transit and billboards.

Here's an assumption-busting sampling of environmental messaging:

- Texas's anti-wildlife poaching hotline appeared on billboards
- World Wildlife Federation bus shelter ads in Washington, DC, called for protection of endangered species
- Florida Wildlife Federation posted rotating messages on digital billboards near the Republican National Convention in 2012
- San Francisco's water utility put conversation messages on billboards
- The League of Conservation Voters bought billboards to criticize politicians who doubt global warming



You've heard – I assume – Marshall McLuhan's trademark quote on communications theory: "The medium is the message."

As it turns out, McLuhan also had a pithy summary regarding assumptions: "Most of our assumptions have outlived their usefulness."