



Written by [David Kelly](#) on August 1, 2023

Senators Urge DOJ to Sue Oil Industry Over Climate Change

Citing the recent “record breaking” temperatures affecting some areas of the nation, Senators Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) sent a [letter](#) Monday to U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland strongly urging the Department of Justice to “bring suits against the fossil fuel industry for its longstanding and carefully coordinated campaign to mislead consumers and discredit climate science in pursuit of massive profits.”

The senators stated that “the actions of ExxonMobil, Shell, and potentially other fossil fuel companies represent a clear violation of federal racketeering laws, truth in advertising laws, consumer protection laws, and potentially other laws, and the Department must act swiftly to hold them accountable for their unlawful actions.” The lawmakers added that “the fossil fuel industry has had scientific evidence about the dangers of climate change and the role that burning fossil fuels play in increasing global temperatures for more than 50 years.”

Bernie Sanders issued a [press release](#) on Monday to ensure his letter on the supposed harm to the environment caused by fossil fuels didn’t go unnoticed:

In 1959, Edward Teller warned the American Petroleum Institute that carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels would raise global temperatures. In 1975, Shell-backed research concluded that increasing atmospheric carbon concentrations could cause global temperature increases that would drive “major climatic changes” and compared the dangers of burning fossil fuels to nuclear waste. Beginning in the late 1970s, Exxon — now ExxonMobil — conducted extensive research on climate change that predicted current rising temperatures “correctly and skillfully.”

Building their case for the DOJ to bring suit against the wealthy “fossil fuel” companies, the senators argued in the letter that according to a climate scientist [report](#), these companies “chose to participate in a decades-long, carefully coordinated campaign of misinformation to obfuscate climate science and convince the public that fossil fuels are not the primary driver of climate change.”



AP Images
Bernie Sanders



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Citing a 2020 [lawsuit](#) filed by the State of Minnesota, they shared that the fossil fuel industry “spent millions on advertising and public relations because they understood that an accurate understanding of climate change would affect their ability to continue to earn profits by conducting business as usual.”

Sanders shared in his press release:

The fossil fuel industry’s illegal, coordinated campaign of misinformation has proven tremendously profitable. From 1990 to 2019, the six largest private fossil fuel companies made \$2.4 trillion in profits. In 2022, Exxon alone made \$56 billion in profits — a record high for a western oil company. Shell reported record earnings of \$39.9 billion. Chevron made a record \$36.5 billion, and BP made a record \$27.7 billion.

While pointing out the gross earnings that the oil giants gained through their supposed decades-long misinformation campaign, Sanders, Markey, Merkley, and Warren compared the oil industry’s campaign to that of the tobacco industry, which was found guilty in 2006 for a “campaign of lying about the dangers of smoking and pushing cigarettes to young people.”

The Senators wrote:

The fossil fuel industry’s illegal misinformation campaign bears striking resemblance to that of the tobacco industry for a reason — both industries have used the [same public relations firms](#) and researchers since the 1950s. [According](#) to Sharon Eubanks, the United States’ lead prosecutor on that case:

“Big oil was engaged in exactly the same type of behavior that the tobacco companies engaged in and were found liable for fraud on a massive scale ... the cover-up, the denial of the problem, the funding of scientists to question science. The same pattern. And some of the same lawyers represent both tobacco and big oil.”

While the senators succeeded in painting the supposed evils of the oil industry and its harmful effects on the world’s climate, they failed miserably to present any worthy alternatives to fossil fuels or to provide any defense to the dirty truth of [environmentally destructive](#) “clean energy” options that most environmentalists support.



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