#DISRUPTDENIAL

HOW BIG BUSINESS IS FUNDING CLIMATE CHANGE DENIAL IN THE 113TH CONGRESS AND WHY THEY SHOULD STOP
INTRODUCTION

The 2014 congressional elections will have a powerful influence on the climate change policies of the United States government and thus on the international community’s response to the defining challenge of our time. For years, an unofficial caucus of climate science deniers on Capitol Hill has blocked action, even as global temperatures have risen and severe weather events grown more severe.

Forecast the Facts Action has therefore produced the first compilation of contributions that US corporations have made to the election campaigns of all 160 members of the climate denier caucus in the 113th Congress. Three key findings emerge from this report.

Three Key Findings:

» Climate deniers in the 113th Congress have received more than $641 million in campaign contributions from thousands of US companies and their employees since 2008, including more than $98 million so far in 2014.

» Even companies with strong rhetorical commitments to climate action have made large contributions to the denier caucus, including Google ($699,195), Microsoft ($1.07 million), Ford ($791,285), United Parcel Service ($1.97 million) and eBay ($252,302).

» Indeed, the vast majority (90 percent) of the corporate contributions to climate deniers have come from outside the fossil fuel industry, with finance and healthcare companies contributing even more money than their fossil fuel counterparts did.
So Damn Much Money

That was the title of a book co-authored in 2009 by Robert Kaiser, a veteran Washington Post editor and correspondent who argued that the gargantuan amounts of money flowing into US election campaigns were a primary cause of the increasingly dysfunctional performance of Congress. Climate change was a leading example, Kaiser wrote, of how money—both the willingness of wealthy contributors to supply it and the eagerness of Senators and Representatives in both parties to receive it—has corrupted responsible, effective governance by inclining the people’s elected representatives to respond more to the wishes of their financial backers than to the needs of the Nation as a whole.

The unofficial caucus of climate deniers scrutinized in this report personify the problem. As defined by the Center for American Progress, the climate change denier caucus consists of 160 Members of the 113th Congress who have publicly rejected the overwhelming scientific consensus that global warming is happening now, largely man-made, and poses grave risks to humans, ecosystems and economies throughout the world. Informally led by Oklahoma Senator James Inhofe, who has called climate science “a hoax,” the denier caucus has been widely credited with blocking congressional efforts to confront the climate crisis, such as the American Clean Energy and Security Act co-sponsored in 2009 by Rep. Henry Waxman of California and Rep. Edward Markey of Massachusetts, which failed in the Senate in 2010.

A complete list of the denier caucus’s 160 Members, along with samples of their statements about climate science, has been published by the Center for American Progress Action War Room. Now, this Forecast the Facts Action report has discovered that these 160 Members, all of whom are Republicans, have received $641 million in campaign contributions from the fossil fuel industry.

Our report, however, is the first to identify all corporate contributions to congressional climate deniers—that is, contributions not only from fossil fuel interests but all US business sectors, including high tech, finance, retail, telecommunications, housing and auto. This report is based on data collected from Federal Election Commission records and assembled by the Center for Responsive Politics, a non-partisan research group in Washington that tracks the influence of money on public policy.

The $641 million in corporate contributions to climate deniers qualifies as a large amount of money even by the bloated standards of US election campaigns. Yet even these staggering figures underestimate the full amount of corporate support for deniers, for not included in this data are contributions from corporate-friendly advocacy groups, such as the Club for Growth, which has given $3.7 million to climate deniers since 2008.

The appendix of this report lists all of the companies or business associations that have funded climate deniers’ election campaigns since 2008. The list ranks companies by the amounts they have contributed to all 160 members of the denier caucus; it also stipulates how many of the 160 a given company has funded and what percentage of that company’s total contributions have gone to deniers.


2 Club for Growth figure supplied by the Center for Responsive Politics.
With Friends Like These...

Google

Et tu, Google?

“You can lie about the effects of climate change, but eventually you’ll be seen as a liar,” Eric Schmidt, the CEO of Google, told a June 2013 conference celebrating Google’s efforts to build “a better web that is better for the environment.” But the campaign finance data compiled in this report raises questions about Google’s own honesty. From 2008 to 2014, while publicly proclaiming its commitment to promoting solar and other forms of renewable energy, Google has contributed $699,195 to members of the climate denier caucus.

Don’t Be Evil” was the motto chosen by the two young Stanford students who founded Google in 1998, Larry Page and Sergei Brin. And sometimes Google’s words and deeds concerning climate change live up to that directive. The company has invested a reported $1 billion to develop solar power and other renewable forms of electricity. In March of 2014, Google pledged to develop high-resolution maps that could help communities across the US project and prepare for future droughts and sea level rise, two of the most worrisome impacts of climate change; the company reportedly donated one billion megabytes of “cloud” storage for the initiative.

But Google also hosted a fundraiser for the number one climate denier in Congress, Senator Inhofe, in 2013. And Google is a member of the American Legislative Exchange Council, a right-wing group that works in state legislatures to reform—weaken or eliminate—what it regards as overly burdensome regulations. For example, ALEC has led the attack against state measures requiring electric utilities to provide a stipulated amount of renewable energy by a given date (aka, “renewable portfolio standards”).

The most disheartening finding of this report is how many self-proclaimed climate good guys have in fact provided millions of dollars to the very politicians who reflexively block all climate legislation. Such funding contradicts the rhetorical commitments of these corporations and undermines their credibility with a range of stakeholders. Here, we provide a table listing the top 10 corporations trying to have it both ways on climate change—saying they want to do the right thing, even as they fund the worst politicians in their political bedfellows.... Google’s support of Senator James Inhofe’s re-election campaign is one of those times.”

With Friends Like These...

Top 10 Corporate Sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Denier contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finance, insurance and real estate</td>
<td>$165,642,783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, education and human resources</td>
<td>$84,100,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy production and distribution</td>
<td>$66,242,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General commerce</td>
<td>$62,705,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorneys and law firms</td>
<td>$56,385,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction and public works</td>
<td>$40,244,021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>$45,956,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications and Electronics</td>
<td>$37,775,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>$35,699,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>$26,419,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense</td>
<td>$11,150,868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$8,935,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$641,257,614</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top 10 Corporate Contributors to Climate Science Deniers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Company Totals</th>
<th>Denier contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT&amp;T Inc</td>
<td>$3,270,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koch Industries</td>
<td>$3,054,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Bankers Assn</td>
<td>$2,984,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Auto Dealers Assn</td>
<td>$2,808,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Assn of Realtors</td>
<td>$2,752,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honeywell International</td>
<td>$2,701,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Beer Wholesalers Assn</td>
<td>$2,661,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exxon Mobil</td>
<td>$2,058,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockheed Martin</td>
<td>$2,032,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Parcel Service</td>
<td>$1,974,663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Google spokespersons have denied that these actions violate the company’s professed values of social and environmental responsibility, saying that while we disagree on climate policy, we share an interest with Senator Inhofe in the employees and data center we have in [his home state of] Oklahoma.” Bravely, some of Google’s own scientists have called out the company on this self-serving double talk. In August of 2013, seventeen Google Science Communication Fellows wrote a letter to Schmidt and Page arguing that, “there are times where companies like Google must display moral leadership and carefully evaluate their political bedfellows.... Google’s support of Senator James Inhofe’s re-election campaign is one of those times.”

Have You Driven a Ford Lately?

The science of climate change “is settled,” William Clay Ford IV, the great-grandson of auto industry icon Henry Ford, said in a speech to a Greenpeace Business conference in October of 2000. “Anyone who disagrees, is, in my view, still in denial,” added Ford. “We at Ford Motor Company have moved on.”14 Fourteen years later, Mr. Ford’s assurances ring hollow. The Ford Motor Company has in fact favored 98 members of the climate denier caucus with $791,285 in campaign contributions, which amounts to 27.9 percent of the company’s total contributions.

When Bill Ford, newly installed as chairman of the Ford Motor Company, withdrew the firm from a climate denier front group known as the Global Climate Coalition in 2000, climate activists were surprised but thrilled. Ford explained that the move—and his related efforts to encourage the company to develop more fuel efficient vehicles and prepare for a future when the internal combustion engine itself would be phased out—were simply in keeping with his lifelong concern for the natural world. “I have been an environmentalist all my life,” Bill Ford frequently told reporters.2

In the company’s “Sustainability Report” for 2008-2009, Mr. Ford declared that he and his colleagues “look forward to working with the Obama administration to develop effective energy and climate change policies.” In the 2011-12 Report, Ford said that pursuing the company’s goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions from the transportation sector had “improved the fuel economy of our US vehicles by 16.8 percent” since 2006. The CO2 emissions of Ford’s own operations, he added, were cut by 31 percent per vehicle produced from 2000 to 2010.2

But if “Ford is deeply committed to sustainability,” as Bill Ford proclaims, why has it given more than three quarters of a million dollars to congressional climate deniers who do all in their power to thwart, even mock, sustainability?3

As one of the world’s richest individuals, Bill Gates is used to his opinions getting a wide and respectful hearing. So it’s a good thing that Gates has repeatedly expressed concern about the climate threat and urged strong action against it. Gates has called for the burning of coal and gas to be phased out by 2050. He has urged the US government to put a price on carbon to provide a market incentive for consumers and businesses to use less fossil fuels. And while many scientists and activists content themselves with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent (from 1990 levels) by 2050, Gates goes further, urging “getting to zero” on emissions.4

Gates has apparently also given his blessing for Microsoft, the company he founded in 1975 and where he remains on the board of directors today (while also serving as chief technology adviser), to take climate change seriously as well. The company’s Climate Change Policy Statement declares, “Climate change is a serious challenge that requires a comprehensive, global response from all sectors of society.” What’s more, the company sees “an important role for governments to provide the frameworks that spur the transition to a low-carbon economy…. Among the steps government should take, according to Microsoft, are increased funding for low-carbon energy sources and establishing market-based mechanisms that incentivize the private sector to invest in such energy sources.”5

These are precisely the kind of government measures, however, that climate deniers in Congress have consistently denigrated and voted against. So why has Microsoft favored these deniers with $1.07 million in campaign contributions since 2008? Is Bill Gates aware of what his company’s political action committee is doing in Washington?

Total contributed to deniers:

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What’s Next, Microsoft-Funding Big Tobacco’s Scientists?

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eBay: The Perfect Store... For Science Climate Deniers

The online marketplace eBay likes to be known for “connecting buyers and sellers globally.” This was until it was revealed that eBay has connected its revenue from those buyers and sellers with the most determined opponents of climate action in Washington, the denier caucus.

eBay has provided over a quarter of a million dollars to the denier caucus since 2008, and the company appears to be increasing its support this year: 30% of eBay’s contributions to deniers between 2008 to 2014 have been given during the 2014 campaign season.

This record of enabling climate denial on Capitol Hill flies in the face of eBay’s repeatedly expressed commitments to tackle the climate crisis. The company’s website, for example, proclaims that “we’re committed to ... radically reducing our environmental impacts,” adding that “we leverage our unique assets and role in the global marketplace to influence Earth-positive impacts along the commerce value chain,” including “reducing carbon emissions throughout our operations.”

What’s more, eBay has signed the Climate Declaration of Businesses for Innovative Climate and Energy Policy, a project of CERES, a non-profit group that seeks to mobilize companies and investors to practice environmental and social sustainability. The BICEP declaration endorses “reducing US greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050” by “promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy, increasing investment in a clean energy economy, and supporting climate change adaptation, technology transfer and forest preservation.” But as is true of the policies endorsed in the Climate Policy Statement of Microsoft—another signatory of the BICEP declaration, along with other funders of climate denial including General Motors, General Mills and Disney—BICEP’s policy agenda is exactly the opposite of that of the climate denier caucus on Capitol Hill.

Deniers

For Science Climate Deniers

No expose of corporate funding of congressional climate denial can be complete without mentioning the single largest funder: AT&T. AT&T’s “Climate and Carbon Emissions Policy” states that the company is “committed to operating in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner...[and] to working with our suppliers to limit environmental impacts and greenhouse gas emissions in our supply chain.”15 This commitment has not deterred AT&T from contributing $3.3 million to climate deniers since 2008, more than 25 percent of its total campaign funding. AT&T has given more money to deniers than even the Koch brothers and ExxonMobil have provided. It’s a record that gives unintended meaning to AT&T’s new corporate slogan: “Mobilizing Your World.” AT&T is mobilizing our world, all right—towards ever more record temperatures and weather-related disasters as deniers in Congress block action against climate change.

UPS: Committed To More...Greenhouse Gas Emissions

“Sustainability is often about creating or doing less: less waste, fewer emissions, fewer impacts,” begins the 2013 Sustainability Report of the United Parcel Service. “But at UPS, we’re Committed To More. In every aspect of our business we strive to do more whether through delivering packages more efficiently, creating more connections around the world or finding more ways to take action and give back.” And UPS insists it is walking the talk on climate change in particular. “We Reduced Our Absolute Carbon Emissions, Again!” boasts the report. Notably absent from UPS’s public proclamations is the fact that the company is one of the most generous corporate funders of climate denial in the United States. The $1.97 million the company has contributed to the election campaigns of congressional climate deniers since 2008 earns UPS the number 10 spot among all corporate funders of climate denial. Committed To More? Yes, but more of what?

Rep. Steve Chabot (R-OH), $17,500

Climategate is “just another example of many in the press, and many in the academic/scientific community having bought into the whole global warming/climate change ‘religion,’ no matter what the facts are.”

Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), $43,100

“I know there’s a lot of money to be made on the bandwagon of global warming, you can make movies, documentaries, get a lot of research money – and that’s okay, I love capitalism. My fear is using the bandwagon of global warming to have Congress act on some knee-jerk reaction which will please some editorialists, will hurt our economy, will not do anything to help us in the future.”

Rep. Tom Price (R-GA), $36,999

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www.ceres.org/bicep/principles/.

www.ebayinc.com/sites/all/themes/ebayinc/images/si/SI_2013_Annual_Update.pdf./


14 See the Declaration, its Principles and Signatories at http://www.ceres.org/bicep/principles/.

15 See the policy at http://about.att.com/content/dam/csr/FAQpdfs/Policypdfs/climate_policy.pdf/.

16 See the policy at http://about.att.com/content/dam/csr/FAQpdfs/Policypdfs/climate_policy.pdf/.


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Funding Climate Science Denial: It’s Not Just For Oil Companies Anymore

It’s hardly news that the Koch brothers and ExxonMobil fund politicians who deny climate science, and indeed this report finds that Koch Industries have contributed $3.05 million to deniers since 2008, while ExxonMobil and its employees have given $2.0 million to deniers. What is surprising, though, is that the majority of corporate contributions to climate deniers have come from companies that do not directly profit from the sale of fossil fuels. Forecast the Facts Action estimates that 90 percent of total corporate campaign contributions to members of the climate denier caucus have come from firms outside the fossil fuel industry.

The non-fossil fuel sectors that have been the most generous to climate deniers include: finance, insurance and real estate (led by the American Bankers Association, which ranks as the third largest giver overall, with $2.98 million contributed, followed by Goldman Sachs, which ranks sixteenth overall, with $1.76 million given to deniers); health, education and human resources (led by the American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons, with $1.5 million and the American Dental Association, with $1.26 million); and housing (led by the National Association of Realtors, with $2.75 million, followed by the National Association of Home Builders with $1.89 million, and the Associated Builders and Contractors with $1.83 million).

Conclusion and Recommendations:
» Align corporate policies on climate change with those on campaign funding
» Halt all campaign contributions to climate deniers immediately

As the November elections approach, Forecast the Facts Action urges journalists, opinion leaders and everyday citizens to question anew the influence corporate money has on our government’s actions, especially in regards to the overriding threat of climate change. In 2014, to fund politicians who deny the overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change is as irresponsible as funding politicians who deny that smoking cigarettes causes cancer. Such funding is especially shameful when it comes from companies who are publicly assuring their shareholders, employees and the American people that they recognize the urgency of the crisis and are committed to addressing it. Google, Microsoft, Ford and other companies that want to be taken seriously as climate change champions must fess up and clean up. They should align their policies on political campaign contributions with their commitments on climate change and halt all funding to politicians who refuse to accept that man-made climate change is a real and present danger.

#DISRUPTDENIAL
Question anew the influence corporate money has on our government’s action.
Methodology

Campaign finance numbers described here were derived from reports filed with the Federal Election Commission and compiled by OpenSecrets.org and made available by Sunlight Foundation. Sector and company totals are based on contributions from PACs and individuals giving $200 or more.

In many cases, the organizations themselves did not donate; rather the money came from the organization’s PAC, its individual members or employees or owners, and those individuals’ immediate families. Opensecrets.org attributes individual contributions to employer totals due to the historical correlation between individuals’ contributions and their employers’ political interests. A detailed description of this methodology can be found at https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/methodology.php.

Company totals include subsidiaries and affiliates. All donations took place during the 2007-2014 election cycles, and were reported by the Federal Election Commission on Monday, July 21, 2014. A full disclosure of the methods used by OpenSecrets to compile these contributions can be found at https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/methodology.php.

The “Denier Caucus” refers to 160 current Representatives and Senators from the 113th Congress that have made public statements denying or doubting the scientifically-established link between pollution and climate change documented by the Center for American Progress. A full list of these members, including statements and sources can be found at http://thinkprogress.org/climate-denier-caucus/.

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Forecast the Facts Action is a grassroots human rights organization dedicated to ensuring that Americans hear the truth about climate change.

SumOfUs is a movement of consumers, workers and shareholders speaking with one voice to counterbalance the growing power of large corporations.

Authors: Brant Olson, Daniel Kessler, Antonia Bruno, Duncan Magidson

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