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Over 100 New York Scientists Urge NY Attorney General to Pursue ExxonMobil Investigation to the Fullest Extent of the Law

Fossil Fuel Companies Should Be Held Accountable For Climate Science Misinformation, Harm to Investors and the Public

NEW YORK (April 21, 2017)—Over 100 scientists from across New York State sent a [letter](#) urging New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman to pursue his investigation into whether ExxonMobil misled investors and the public and climate change to “the fullest extent of the law.” The letter was delivered after a group of 11 Republican state attorneys general filed a brief to the U.S. District Court in Manhattan supporting a lawsuit by ExxonMobil to halt the probe by Attorneys General in New York and Massachusetts.

Schneiderman launched his investigation in 2015 shortly after reports by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), InsideClimate News and the Los Angeles Times—in collaboration with Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism—revealed that top executives at ExxonMobil were well informed about the climate risks resulting from the use of their products. Yet, they spent decades investing in major disinformation campaigns to sow doubt about those risks and undermine the urgency of policy action.

Since then, ExxonMobil has tried to block the investigation by filing a lawsuit against Schneiderman and subpoenaing scientists and climate advocates, including UCS. In their brief supporting ExxonMobil’s lawsuit, the Republican attorneys general cited an article from the National Review by Scott Pruitt, who at the time was attorney general for Oklahoma and is now head of the Environmental Protection Agency, claiming that “scientists continue to disagree about the degree and extent of global warming and its connection to the actions of mankind.”

“Research by government and university scientists, and ExxonMobil’s as well, has shown for decades that burning fossil fuels causes climate change, and that impacts will intensify until emissions are reduced” said Michael Oppenheimer, New York City resident and professor of geosciences and international affairs at Princeton University. “New Yorkers deserve to know what role ExxonMobil and other firms played in misleading investors, policymakers, and the public about the facts.”

The letter noted that New Yorkers face increasing climate change impacts, including damage to coastal communities from rising seas, extreme heat in cities during the summer, and more episodes of extreme precipitation.

“We’re at a point now when a lot of climate change impacts are locked in from decades of burning fossil fuels, and New Yorkers are already paying the price,” said Mark Cane, professor of earth and climate sciences at Columbia University and member of the National Academy of Sciences. “My colleagues and I have spent our careers working to understand and predict both natural and anthropogenic climate changes in the hopes that we can improve the lives of our

communities here and around the world. Science is critical to improving our quality of life; and when it is ignored, or distorted, our communities suffer.”

The letter was delivered as students and professors at universities around the state held activities during the week preceding the much-anticipated March for Science set for April 22, highlighting the need for action on climate change.

“In the face of climate impacts, we can look to science for the way forward,” said David Borton, now-retired professor of mechanical engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. “Research on solar and wind shows us that we can accelerate the transition to clean energy with no threat to electricity systems.”

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The Union of Concerned Scientists puts rigorous, independent science to work to solve our planet’s most pressing problems. Joining with citizens across the country, we combine technical analysis and effective advocacy to create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe and sustainable future. For more information, go to www.ucsusa.org.

Pursue ExxonMobil Investigation to the Fullest Extent of the Law

A Letter to New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman

Office of the New York Attorney General
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12224-0341

April 20, 2017

Dear Eric Schneiderman,

We write as members of the New York science community to support the investigation by the New York attorney general's office into the role that the fossil fuel giant ExxonMobil apparently played in misleading policymakers, investors, and the public about the reality of climate change.

As you know, climate change poses significant threats to the health and well-being of our nation and the world. The primary cause is the release of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases from burning fossil fuels. Across our state, coastal communities face increasing damage from rising seas, cities experience increasing extreme summer heat, our agricultural and tourism industries confront the vagaries of increasingly variable seasons, and the entire state suffers the consequences of substantially amplified episodes of extreme precipitation.

Recent reports by the Union of Concerned Scientists, Inside Climate News, and the Los Angeles Times (in collaboration with Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism) indicate that top executives at ExxonMobil were well informed about the climate risks resulting from the use of their products even as they spent decades investing in major disinformation campaigns to sow doubt about those risks and undermine the urgency of policy action.

To be sure, governments, emitting industries (e.g., electric utilities), and individuals all bear some responsibility for climate change. But major fossil fuel companies are substantial contributors to the problem, and therefore must take responsibility for their actions.

It is time for fossil fuel companies to be held accountable for their contributions to climate change, the harms their products have caused, and any failure to adhere to New York State law in communicating about the risks and impacts of their products. We encourage you to pursue your investigation to the fullest extent of the law in order to uncover any past wrongdoing and deter future misconduct.

Signed by:

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Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only.

Pursue ExxonMobil Investigation to the Fullest Extent of the Law

A Letter to New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman

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