



(<http://buffalo>

[BN]

(<http://buffalo>

[B

(<http://>



# Another Voice: ExxonMobil has a history of denying climate change

By John S. Szalasny

“The First Amendment does not give you the right to commit fraud,” State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman said during his press briefing earlier this year regarding the state’s investigation into charges ExxonMobil knowingly deceived the public and shareholders about climate change.

Proving that the company defrauded shareholders by withholding potential corporate liability may be the only way to hold oil companies accountable for their role in the increase in greenhouse gases.

ExxonMobil has gone to federal court to fight the subpoenas from the New York and Massachusetts attorneys general requesting additional information. The company states that “for more than a decade, it has widely and publicly confirmed that it recognizes the risk of climate change.” How it has done business in this time, however, tells a different story.

Of the major oil companies, ExxonMobil stands out for its public remarks on climate science. At its 2015 annual meeting, CEO Rex Tillerson argued that the world should wait to improve its understanding of climate science before taking action. At its 2016 meeting, Tillerson stated that the climate models are not accurate. In 2014, Tillerson was also on the board of directors at the American Petroleum Institute.

ExxonMobil is still a key player in an organization that has followed a strategy since 1998 to deliberately cloud the public's understanding of climate science by casting doubt on the science, including the funding of those studies that keeps the consensus of scientists at 97 to 98 percent. This is a page straight out of the tobacco industry handbook, which denied the link of smoking to lung cancer despite its own internal studies showing the link in the 1950s.

ExxonMobil is also the largest corporation in the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). This group's agenda is to write sample legislation to disrupt enforcement of state and federal regulations on businesses.

Its energy goals, written in partnership with fossil fuel and utility interests, have been to write laws that involve the slowdown or elimination of transitions to clean energy or a reduction in carbon emissions. Prominent climate deniers are regularly the featured speaker at ALEC meetings.

According to a Scientific American report, the company was aware of the risk of climate change as early as 1977. Based on internal studies, the company's models predicted a temperature rise consistent with today's climate models. Despite this, the company directly spent millions over the next 30 years to promote climate change denial.

The parallels to the state settlement with the tobacco industry are too obvious to ignore.

If a settlement is reached with ExxonMobil, it should be used to improve our electric infrastructure with smart- grid technology to manage electric generation from new renewable wind and solar sources to better meet consumer demand.

John S. Szalasny, of Williamsville, is a member of the Niagara Sierra Club Climate and Clean Energy Group.

---