

Liberal Lawmaker Attacks Exxon-Affiliated Group He Once Praised

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Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse blasted a conservative think tank for being a part of the “web of denial” on global warming, despite once praising the group’s support for a carbon fee.

The Rhode Island Democrat and Democratic Sen. Brian Schatz from Hawaii accused several organizations of engaging in “climate denial” in a [letter to ExxonMobil](#) Tuesday. One of the groups targeted by the two U.S. senators — the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) — once promoted Whitehouse’s favorable position on a carbon fee.

Whitehouse heaped praise on AEI for not being part of the caldron of groups tied into the fossil fuel industry sphere of influence.

Whitehouse’s critical comments come less than a year after he cheered the group for promoting carbon fees.

“The unpleasant fact here in Congress presently, anyway, is that Congress is ruled by the lobbyists and the political enforcers for the fossil fuel industry,” the liberal lawmaker [wrote on his website in 2015](#). “But outside this Chamber, where the fossil fuel industry’s power is less fierce, there is considerable conservative support for a carbon fee.”

Whitehouse propped up the group’s pro-carbon fee position on his website by referencing comments from AEI academic scholars Kevin Hassett, Steven Hayward, and Kenneth Greene.

“Because a carbon tax would cause carbon emissions to be reduced efficiently across the entire market, other measures that are less efficient—and sometimes even perverse in their impacts—could be eliminated,” the academics [stated at an event in 2007](#).

His comments Tuesday struck a much different tone.

Whitehouse and Schatz’s letter was in response to a [message from Theresa Fariello](#), vice president of Exxon Washington Office, who attempted to reassure the senators that Exxon believes global warming exists and is in favor of a carbon tax.

Still, Fariello’s reassurances were not enough to appease Whitehouse.

“Ms. Fariello’s letter attempts to assure us that ExxonMobil now believes climate change is real, that it’s stopped funding climate deniers, and that it has long supported a revenue-neutral carbon fee,” Whitehouse and Schatz wrote. “That does not conform with our information and experience.”

The two lawmakers went on to rank-out AEI, the U.S. Chamber Of Commerce Foundation, and the Manhattan Institute as bald-faced climate “denialists” receiving droves of cash from the oil company.

The thoroughly anti-Exxon lawmaker recently railed against several organizations striking critical positions against man-made global warming.

Whitehouse, for instance, directed 19 of his fellow Democratic senators in July to attack conservative and libertarian organizations such as Americans for Prosperity and the Cato Institute on the chamber floors for engaging in what the senators call a “web of denial.”

Another group that has been targeted by Democrats in the past – Competitive Enterprise Institute – managed to obtain emails in December showing Whitehouse was in direct communication with a group of scientists requesting the Obama administration and the Department of Justice prosecute global warming skeptics.