



Latest Attempt to Take Down ExxonKnew Denounced as 'Buffoonery'

Dierdre Fulton

August 31, 2016

Marking an escalation in the fight over ExxonMobil and climate change, U.S. Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas), has scheduled a hearing for September 14 to probe the ongoing investigation by attorneys general into whether the oil giant misled the public and investors on global warming.

Smith chairs the House Committee on Space, Science and Technology, which last month **issued subpoenas** to the attorneys general of Massachusetts and New York, as well as a slew of environmental groups over **ExxonKnew**. Each of those entities has **refused to comply** with the subpoenas, claiming they represent not only congressional overreach but also the fossil fuels industry's undue influence over policymakers.

In turn, **the hearing** will ostensibly "explore the validity of the committee's current inquiry in the context of Congress' broad oversight authority," as well as potential "recourse for failure to comply," **according to** a notice posted Tuesday.

According to *InsideClimate News*:

Among the Republican majority witnesses to testify at the **Sept. 14 hearing** will be two law professors with connections to think tanks funded by the fossil fuel industry and who have been critical of the attorneys general. The third is a liberal law scholar and professor who has frequently testified before Congress. The Democrats on the committee have yet to name a minority witness.

One witness, Florida International University College of Law professor Elizabeth Price Foley, recently penned a *Wall Street Journal* **op-ed** that called the two attorneys general "utterly wrong" for refusing to comply with the subpoenas, *InsideClimate News* points out. She is affiliated with the conservative Cato Institute.

Meanwhile, Ronald D. Rotunda, a law professor of at Chapman University's Dale E. Fowler School of Law who will also testify, "is associated with the Heartland Institute and is a frequent contributor to the organization's policy blog, which often features writings challenging the scientific consensus on manmade climate change," *InsideClimate News* reports.

"Maybe instead of this buffoonery, the House Science committee could call on, you know, a scientist, to re-explain the threat of climate change and the role of the fossil fuel industry in causing the crisis," **said** Jamie Henn, communications director for 350.org, one of the groups to receive a subpoena. "Rep. Smith sounds like he could use a refresher course."

Perhaps, Henn added, "this hearing should take on ExxonMobil as a corporate sponsor—they're certainly the money and influence behind it. Rep. Smith has zero authority or cause to subpoena us, the attorneys general, or any other groups looking to uncover the truth about Exxon's climate lies."

The latest developments come as conservatives attempt to **spin a counter-narrative** aimed at **undermining** the ExxonKnew effort.

And on Wednesday, the Competitive Enterprise Institute—which has "**routinely disputed that global warming is a problem**" and received around \$2 million in funding from ExxonMobil from 1995-2005, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists—**sued** New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman seeking copies of any secrecy agreements related to the ExxonKnew investigation.