



## **Dem Congressmen: First Amendment Doesn't Protect Global Warming Skeptics**

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California congressmen wrote a letter to state attorney general Kamala Harris claiming the freedom of speech "is not designed to protect fraud and deceit" of the lies being spread by oil company ExxonMobil about global warming.

Nineteen Democratic lawmakers told Harris her "investigation as to whether ExxonMobil lied about the truth of climate change and misled investors does not constitute an effort to silence speech or scientific research.

"The First Amendment protects freedom of speech, but it does not protect companies from defrauding the American people or improperly disclosing information to their shareholders," lawmakers, including California Reps. Maxine Waters and Ted Lieu, wrote to Harris. Harris joined attorneys general from New York, Massachusetts and the U.S. Virgin Islands in investigating Exxon's global warming stance based on reporting by liberal journalists.

Reporters with InsideClimate News and Columbia University claim the oil company tried to cover up climate science and fund groups that were opposed to federal energy regulations and skeptical of man-made warming. Harris is now investigating whether or not Exxon misled shareholders about the risks of global warming.

Lieu, Waters and the other Democrats writing to Harris sent their letter in response to an inquiry from Texas Republican Rep. Lamar Smith. Smith, the chairman of the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, requested documents from state AGs and environmentalists working against Exxon.

"We are supportive of your investigation and believe the Science Committee's baseless allegations against you are nothing more than part of his continued agenda to assault climate

science,” the Democrats wrote. “As you know, recent evidence suggests that leading oil companies, such as ExxonMobil and Shell, confirmed the science of climate change decades ago and even changed their business decisions to adapt to a warming planet.”

Republicans, however, have come out against the Exxon probe, arguing it’s being pushed behind the scenes by activists with an ax to grind. AG investigations into Exxon has also sparked free speech concerns since it has ensnared dozens of conservative think tanks, policy experts and scientists.

Virgin Islands AG Claude Walker joined Harris and others in targeting Exxon. Walker has already subpoenaed a libertarian think and a D.C.-based public relations firm.

Walker’s subpoena targets prominent conservative and libertarian think tanks, including the Heritage Foundation, the Heartland Institute, the Cato Institute, the Competitive Enterprise Institute and the Institute for Energy Research.

Walker’s also targeting communications with climate scientists who are more skeptical of claims that fossil fuels are causing catastrophic global warming. Walker’s targeting scientists, including Dr. John Christy of the University of Alabama, who operates a satellite-based climate dataset, Cato’s Dr. Patrick Michaels, and Dr. Willie Soon of the Harvard-Smithsonian Institute.

“Exxon is a resident of the state of Texas, and we felt this was an attack on their first amendment rights,” Texas Republican AG Ken Paxton said after he and Alabama’s AG filed court briefs in support of Exxon.

“They have every right to have their opinions on climate change. In my opinion you cross the line when you start prosecuting individuals for disagreeing with you,” he said.

California Democrats don’t seem to care about Exxon’s right to free speech, since they think the company was perpetuating a massive disinformation campaign — all while somehow running one of the world’s largest oil companies.

Democrats wrote the oil industry “began a coordinated campaign of mass deception as to the truth of climate science — spreading doubt and confusion among the public and ultimately sinking climate action in Congress.”