



AGs Use Exxon Probe To Target Dozens Of Conservative Groups And Scientists

Michael Bastasch

May 3, 2016

Democratic attorneys general (AG) are using the investigation into ExxonMobil's global warming stance to target communications between the company and 142 conservative groups, skeptic scientists and other academics.

Walker subpoenaed Exxon in March after joining three Democratic state attorneys general from California, Massachusetts and New York in an investigation into whether or not the company misled the public on the science behind global warming.

Walker's subpoena is only one part of a larger investigation into Exxon being pushed by mostly Democratic AGs (Walker is a liberal-leaning Independent) to prove the company orchestrated a conspiracy to fool the public about global warming.

The Daily Caller News Foundation obtained an unredacted version of the subpoena sent to Exxon containing the names of 88 organizations and 54 scientists, academics and other experts. Exxon's countersuit to Walker's subpoena says "three-quarters" of the organizations Walker is targeting "have been identified by environmental advocacy groups as opposing policies in favor of addressing climate change or disputing the science in support of climate change."

Likewise, Exxon said 80 percent of the individuals targeted "have been identified in the media as having a viewpoint on climate change, either oppose policies in favor of addressing climate change or dispute the science in support of climate change."

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

So far, the Competitive Enterprise Institute is the only free market thinktank to be subpoenaed by Walker. CEI was also subpoenaed in March, but has since fought back and called Walker's investigation an attack on free speech.

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.

Soon has been the target of environmental activists for years. Most recently, the New York Times published documents obtained by a former Greenpeace activists purporting to show Soon not disclosing that he took money from an energy company that could benefit from spreading doubt about global warming.

Walker's investigation is based on reporting by InsideClimate News and Columbia University. Those reports purport to show Exxon knew oil production would make global warming worse, but continued to conduct business and fund groups skeptical of global warming regulations.

But Walker's subpoena is only one part of the probe into Exxon. New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman was the first state prosecutor to launch an investigation into Exxon's global warming activities in November, and has since been working with environmental activists to push their case even further, according to leaked emails.

Those leaked emails also showed Walker and other AGs were presented with a common interest agreement to coordinate state-level investigations into Exxon. It's not clear which AGs signed the common interest agreement, but it's clear AGs are all taking different angles to get the documents from Exxon they believe will show the public they were being misled.

For months, Democrats and environmentalists have been calling for the Department of Justice to launch a Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, or RICO, investigation into groups skeptical of catastrophic global warming.

"Financial damages alone may be insufficient," Schneiderman said during the event in New York City in March. "The First Amendment does not give you the right to commit fraud."