

# Fake Grassroots Campaign Against Wind Industry Exposed

By [Leon Kaye](#) | May 10th, 2012



Wind power is under attack from "astroturf" groups.

The [Checks and Balances Project](#) and [Climate Progress](#) have revealed a memo outlining a national public relations campaign to undermine the wind power industry. The aggressive campaign, determined to create a "groundswell" of citizen activism against any wind energy legislation at all levels of government, targeted just about every demographic group from students to potential lease grantors.

John Droz, Jr., a longtime foe of the wind energy industry and senior fellow at the right-wing [American Tradition Institute](#), an organization that focuses on "restoring science, accountability, and liberty to the environmental policy debate," reportedly led the group. Droz and other anti-wind advocates gathered in Washington, DC earlier this year to discuss how they could [recruit a national team](#) of "wind warriors" that could fight companies within the wind power sector.

The [memo](#) starts with the overall theme of the PR campaign, urging targeted messages that instead of standing against something (as in wind power), be for "science." The minimum goal was to campaign against any state and local efforts to expand wind energy, with its broadest goal to "constructively influence national and state energy and environmental policies."

## Some of the tactics in the early stages included:

- Partnering with think tanks across the political spectrum such as the Brookings Institute and Cato Institute, and also conservative lobbying organizations such as the [Heartland Institute](#) and [ALEC](#), which in hindsight would have muddled their efforts.

- “Encourage critical thinking from members and the public.”
- Recruiting volunteers without establishing a formal national organization, using them as a lobbying effort to influence lawmakers and providing public relations training. No word whether Texas Governor **Rick Perry**, a supporter of wind power, was on any such list.
- Collaborating with like-minded groups such as tea party activists, “true environmentalists,” business organizations and property rights activists.

In the event the group could establish a national organization, Droz et al. would launch a think tank to distribute white papers, and counter the wind energy’s outreach on PR Newswire with its own media campaign using that same company as a platform. An advertising campaign on all media would employ a well-known spokesperson “with star credibility,” preferably on a volunteer basis. A youth outreach program targeting public schools and colleges would sponsor science fairs and other school activities with the goal to “steer away” students from wind because they would then “discover that [wind power] doesn’t meet the criteria we set up.” Meanwhile a “dummy business” would enter communities considering wind power development with proposals to build 400 foot billboards.

Other “counter-intelligence” measures would include a massive social media campaign and a tell-all “expose” book about the wind power industry. Another idea was a “meme Response Coordinator” that would target companies using symbols or seals demonstrating that wind power was used to make the product. This anti-wind group in turn would then assign a tax-wasting symbol on the product and urge a boycott of the product on its website. And when PR was not enough, a team of lawyers would take property developers involve with wind energy projects to court in order to, at the very least, cause media exposure. All of these shenanigans, of course, would then be broadcast on sympathetic news outlets including the Washington Times, Wall Street Journal and **Fox News**.

Considering the goals of the group, its initial finance request was rather meager. Necessary seed money for the organization would have started at \$750,000, and the director of this group, who would be both PR savvy and could “think outside the box,” would start at a minimum of \$80,000 a year. And in a nod to the effects that **Citizens United** is having on political debates throughout the country, a professional fundraiser was recommended to collect donations for both a 501(c)3 non-profit and a super PAC.

This scheme may have fallen flat, but expect similar campaigns against clean energy and environmental policies to keep popping up and showing no transparency about who exactly is propping them up. In this era of phony non-profits and think tanks, this latest fake grassroots plan demonstrates that public policy has nothing to do with long term planning or science and everything to do with what organizations have the most money and connections to our political leaders.

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