



## Google Still Cozy With Those 'Literally Lying' About Climate Change

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When Google announced its withdrawal from the American Legislative Exchange Council over the conservative group's denial of climate change, it tried to establish its environmental bona fides. We should be careful before praising the tech company for trying to make green the new black, though — it funds organizations and candidates that question the science of global warming and Google Chairman Eric Schmidt has personally donated thousands of dollars in the 2014 election cycle to legislators who deny climate change.

Schmidt made a splash by saying ALEC, and all climate change deniers, are “literally lying” to the detriment of future generations during an interview on NPR's Diane Rehm show September 22. “We should not be aligned with such people,” Schmidt concluded.

However, Google's alignment with “such people” doesn't end with ALEC. According to the company's U.S. Public Policy page, its government affairs team “provides support” to a number of other third-party organizations that promote climate change denial, including the Competitive Enterprise Institute, American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation and Heritage Action, the Federalist Society, Americans for Tax Reform, the Mercatus Center, and the CATO Institute.

Since the 2008 election cycle, approximately 17 percent of the money from Google's political action committee has gone to candidates who deny climate change science. Google PAC has spent more than \$3.1 million since the 2008, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. The environmental organization Forecast the Facts estimates that the PAC has donated \$530,500 to climate deniers in that same time period, a number gleaned from cross-referencing Federal Election Committee data with a CAP Action compilation of the “Anti-Science Climate Denier Caucus.” This election cycle, Google PAC gave \$2,500 to Congresswoman Marcia Blackburn (R-TN), the same legislator who debated Bill Nye about climate change on Meet the Press.

Much to the chagrin of progressives, Google hosted a fundraiser for Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK) in its D.C. offices back in July 2013. Inhofe is one of the most vocal deniers of climate change on Capitol Hill. He infamously called global warming "the second-largest hoax ever played on the American people, after the separation of church and state."

Eric Schmidt has personally donated \$12,900 during the 2014 election cycle to individual congressional candidates who deny climate change, like Congressman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA), Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) and Congressman Darrell Issa (R-CA), according to FEC information compiled by the Center for Responsive Politics. These donations make up a little more than 11 percent of Schmidt's total donations this cycle, and all of these politicians are either in leadership, on the Judiciary Committees (which cover antitrust, patent and copyright matters), and/or on the Finance Committees.

Environmental organization Forecast the Facts provided Talking Points Memo with never-before published FEC numbers that demonstrate Schmidt has donated \$29,000 to legislators who deny climate change since 2008.

These donations are at odds with Google's purported commitment to environmentalism. The company says that it has been carbon neutral since 2007 and has donated \$1.5 billion in grants to renewable energy projects.

Google did not respond to multiple requests for comment about whether Google, Google PAC or Schmidt would continue funding these organizations and legislators via phone and email.

ALEC has found itself in the progressive viewfinder these past few years for its advocacy of "Stand Your Ground" laws, tightening voter identification rules, tax breaks for the wealthy, and, most relevant to this discussion, loosening environmental regulations and doubting the science behind climate change, including a bill that would require teaching climate change denial in schools. It connects legislators, largely at the state level, with corporate lobbyists to collaborate on model legislation.

Microsoft withdrew from ALEC in July of this year, citing concerns about the group's environmental policies. Since Schmidt's announcement on NPR, Facebook, Yahoo, and Yelp have all issued statements about their involvement with ALEC. Yahoo and Yelp both announced that they were ending their membership, and Facebook is seriously considering.

While Schmidt's "literally lying" soundbite has gotten the most play, it's important to look at what he initially said in response to the question about Google's involvement with ALEC: "We funded them as part of a political game for something unrelated."

Google joined ALEC in August 2011 and paid membership dues of \$10,000 annually. The organization's senior director of public affairs, Bill Meierling, told Bloomberg that Google was

involved in a communications and technology task force within ALEC to talk about broadband, privacy and e-commerce. Climate change isn't the only thing on Google's agenda. Government surveillance, net neutrality, and the collection of consumer data immediately come to mind.

Now that ALEC has a case of political cooties, many corporations are finding that the group is more of a liability than a boon for advancing their policy ends. But that doesn't mean that the fight against the ideas that ALEC represents is over.

Corporations often insure continued legislative access by donating equally to both political parties. The two largest personal donations from Schmidt are both for \$32,300 — one to the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and one to the National Republican Senatorial Committee. Political game, indeed, and Google is well-situated to win every time. Who loses, though?