

Climate Science vs. Fossil Fuel Fiction

An Infographic from the Union of Concerned Scientists

www.ucsusa.org/fossilfuelfiction

Source Material and Background Information March 2015

“Predictions of catastrophic global warming are theoretical and are not maintained by a general consensus within the scientific community.” – American Legislative Executive Council (ALEC), 1995

Source

This quote comes from a leaked “Legislative Issue Brief,” accessed from the Legacy Tobacco Documents database.ⁱ While this document itself is not dated, the title of the memo is listed in the table of contents of another ALEC document from 1995.ⁱⁱ

Exposing the Disinformation: Science Facts

At the time of this quote, the scientific evidence of the cause and impacts of climate change was well documented. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established in 1988 in recognition of the problem of global warming. Climate experts from around the world synthesize the most recent climate science findings in periodic reports. The 1995 IPCC Assessment Report clearly states “the balance of evidence suggests a discernible human influence on global climate”ⁱⁱⁱ and goes on to describe in detail the range of this influence, such as sea-level rise, increased temperatures, and extreme heat. In addition, the report states “Potentially serious changes have been identified, including an increase in some regions in the incidence of extreme high-temperature events, floods and droughts, with resultant consequences for fires, pest outbreaks, and ecosystem composition, structure and functioning, including primary productivity.”^{iv}

More about American Legislative Exchange Council

ALEC works to influence policy on behalf of powerful corporate interests, including the fossil fuel industry. Internal documents show the ALEC has for several decades engaged in disinformation campaigns to sow doubt about climate science among state legislators, while peddling various forms of “model legislation” to obstruct progress on climate solutions.^v

At the center of these attacks is ALEC's Energy, Environment, and Agriculture Task Force, which convenes closed door meetings where state legislators are presented with misinformation on climate science and lobbied by fossil fuel interests. Leaked whistleblower documents^{vi,vii} reveal that recent (2010-2011) membership in ALEC's Energy, Environment, and Agriculture Task Force include BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Peabody Energy, and Shell; several industry trade associations are also members of this task force, including the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity (ACCCE), American Gas Association (AGA), and the American Petroleum Institute (API).^{viii} In addition, ExxonMobil is listed as a current member of ALEC's Private Advisory Council, and Peabody Energy was a member of the Private Advisory Council in 2014.^{ix} Shell confirmed it remains a member of ALEC in late 2014.^x In 2012, a ConocoPhillips spokesperson confirmed that the company was no longer a member of ALEC and had no plans to rejoin in 2013.^{xi}

ALEC's Energy, Environment, and Agriculture Task Force distributes "model" legislation to state legislators that they can easily introduce to oppose EPA carbon standards and roll back renewable energy standards. In a leaked resolution adopted in 2007, the American Legislative Exchange Council urged "EPA to not make an endangerment finding under § 202 of the Clean Air Act and regulate greenhouse gases from mobile sources."^{xii} ALEC claimed that there is a "lack of evidence that human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases will 'endanger public health or welfare' as required by § 202 of the Clean Air Act..." In 2011, ALEC publicly took credit for 13 states adopting resolutions "in opposition to the EPA's plans to regulate greenhouse gas emissions."^{xiii} In 2014, ALEC revisited its 2007 resolution as one justification for adopting a new resolution again stating that, "EPA should not pursue regulation of greenhouse gases."^{xiv} In 2012, ALEC began to promulgate model legislation aimed at repealing state renewable energy standards (RES).^{xv} ALEC took credit for the introduction of RES rollback legislation in 15 states in 2013, although none of those bills passed.^{xvi} At least 14 RES rollback bills were introduced in 2014, with two passing in Ohio and Wisconsin.^{xvii}

Recent revelations from ALEC's 2014 annual meeting in Dallas indicate that the unscientific views of climate contrarians continue to dominate the group's agenda.^{xviii,xix} The meeting was sponsored by Chevron, ExxonMobil, Peabody Energy, and ACCCE.^{xx}

ⁱ American Legislative Exchange Council. n.d. Legislative issue brief: Global warming and the greenhouse effect. Online at <http://beta.industrydocuments.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/docs/lxlj0147>, accessed December 8, 2014.

ⁱⁱ American Legislative Exchange Council. 1995. Legislative issue briefs. Online at <http://beta.industrydocuments.library.ucsf.edu/documentstore/y/s/k/j/yskj0147/yskj0147.pdf>, accessed December 8, 2014.

ⁱⁱⁱ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). 1995. IPCC second assessment synthesis of scientific-technical information relevant to interpreting article 2 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. In *IPCC Second Assessment Report*, edited by Bolin, B., J.T. Houghton, G.M. Filho, R.T. Watson, M.C. Zinyowera, J. Bruce, H. Lee, B. Callander, R. Moss, E. Haites, R.A. Moreno, T. Banuri, Z. Dadi, B. Gardner, J. Goldemberg, J.C. Hourcade, M. Jefferson, J. Melillo, I. Mintzer, R. Odingo, M. Parry, M. Perdomo, C. Quennet-Thielen, P. Vellinga,

and N. Sundararaman. Cambridge, UK and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Online at <https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/climate-changes-1995/ipcc-2nd-assessment/2nd-assessment-en.pdf>, accessed February 25, 2015.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Gomberg, Sam. 2014. ALEC can't deny its record of climate change disinformation. Online at <http://blog.ucsusa.org/alec-record-of-climate-change-disinformation-680>, accessed February 25, 2015.

^{vi} Woods, C. 2010. 35-day mailing—States nation policy summit. Memorandum to the Energy, Environment and Agriculture Task Force members of the American Legislative Exchange Council, October 27. Online at http://www.commoncause.org/issues/more-democracy-reforms/alec/whistleblower-complaint/original-complaint/National_ALEC_Exhibit_4_EEA_2010_SNPS.pdf, accessed December 8, 2014.

^{vii} Weynand, B. 2011. 35-day mailing—Annual meeting. Memorandum to the Energy, Environment and Agriculture Task Force members of the American Legislative Exchange Council, June 30. Online at http://www.commoncause.org/issues/more-democracy-reforms/alec/whistleblower-complaint/original-complaint/National_ALEC_Exhibit_4_EEA_2011_Annual_Meeting.pdf, accessed December 8, 2014.

^{viii} Sourcewatch. 2014. ALEC Corporations. Retrieved from:

http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/ALEC_Corporations

^{ix} American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). 2015. Private enterprise council members. Online at <http://www.alec.org/about-alec/private-enterprise-advisory-council/>, accessed February 25, 2015.

^x Elgin, Ben. 2014. Shell pressured to sever ties with ALEC. *Bloomberg Businessweek*, November 4. Online at <http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles/2014-11-04/shell-oil-pressured-to-sever-ties-with-alec-over-climate-change-positions>, accessed March 4, 2015.

^{xi} The Center for Media and Democracy. 2013. Shareholder push firms to cut ties to ALEC; 49 corporations now out. *PR Watch*, June 25. Online at <http://beta.industrydocuments.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/docs/lxlj0147>, accessed December 12, 2014.

^{xii} Center for Media and Democracy. Resolution in opposition to EPA's regulation of greenhouse gases from mobile source. *PR Watch*, no date. Online at http://www.alecexposed.org/w/images/5/50/3B0-ALEC_Resolution_in_Opposition_to_EPA_Regulation_of_Greenhouse_Gases_from_Mobile_Sources_Exposed.pdf, accessed February 25, 2015.

^{xiii} American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). 2011. ALEC state legislators push back EPA's onslaught of regulations: ALEC's EPA regulatory train wreck proving to be successful. Online at <http://www.alec.org/alec-state-legislators-push-back-epa-s-onslaught-of-regulations-alec-s-epa-regulatory-train-wreck-proving-to-be-successful/>, accessed February 25, 2015.

^{xiv} American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). 2014. Resolution in Response to EPA's Plan to Regulate Greenhouse Gases Under the Clean Air Act. June 14. Washington, D.C. Online at <http://www.alec.org/model-legislation/resolution-response-epas-plan-regulate-greenhouse-gases-clean-air-act/>

^{xv} Eilperin, Juliet. 2012. Climate skeptic group works to reverse renewable energy mandates. *Washington Post*, November 24. Online at http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/climate-skeptic-group-works-to-reverse-renewable-energy-mandates/2012/11/24/124faa0-3517-11e2-9cfa-e41bac906cc9_story.html, accessed February 25, 2015.

^{xvi} Goldberg, Suzanne. 2013. ALEC calls for penalties on 'freerider' homeowners in assault on clean energy. *The Guardian*, December 4. Online at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/04/alec-freerider-homeowners-assault-clean-energy>, accessed February 25, 2015.

^{xvii} Center for a New Energy Economy. 2014. Summary of state renewable portfolio standard legislation in 2014. *Colorado State University*, August. Online at <http://www.aeltracker.org/graphics/uploads/CNEE-2014-State-RPS-Legislation-Analysis.pdf>, accessed February 25, 2015.

^{xviii} Negin, Elliott. 2014. More lies from ALEC about climate change. *Huffington Post*, November 13. Online at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elliott-negin/more-lies-from-alec-about_b_6149568.html, accessed December 8, 2014.

^{xix} American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). 2013. 2013 annual meeting policy report. Online at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.documentcloud.org/documents/842268/alec-2013-annual-meeting-policy-report.pdf>, accessed December 8, 2014.

^{xx} Surgey, N. 2014. Coal and oil polluters dominate ALEC conference. *PR Watch*, July 31. Online at: <http://www.prwatch.org/news/2014/07/12557/polluters>, accessed March 5, 2015.