

## **VIDEO REPORT: Senate Budget Committee Exposes Big Oil's Evolving Efforts to Avoid Accountability for Climate Change**

**Washington, D.C.**— The Senate Budget Committee, chaired by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), held a [hearing](#) that exposed the fossil fuel industry's deception and doublespeak to mislead the public and avoid accountability for climate change. The hearing followed the [release](#) of shocking new documents alongside a [joint staff report](#), published by the Senate Budget Committee and Democrats on the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, as part of a multi-year investigation that was initiated by House Oversight and is now being jointly pursued with Senate Budget.

As part of the investigation, Senate Budget Committee released a [video](#) highlighting key evidence that Big Oil deceived the American public about the alleged climate safety of natural gas, its actual commitment to pursuing low carbon technologies such as algae-based biofuels and carbon capture, and its support for the Paris Agreement and methane regulations.

**\*\*\* [WATCH THE VIDEO](#) \*\*\***



**Budget Chairman Whitehouse, in opening remarks delivered during the hearing:** “The collective record shows the fossil fuel industry going through four phases. ... This hearing documents Phase Four: the industry pivoting to pretending it is taking climate change seriously — while secretly undermining its own publicly-stated goals. Phase Four is nominally expressing alignment with the Paris Agreement climate goals, while internally making them unachievable. Phase Four is stating emissions reduction targets too far out to matter, and internally not taking the steps necessary to meet them. Phase Four is advertising your interest in climate safety technologies, but refusing to put the investments behind them to make them real. Phase Four, put simply, is Climate Denial Lite, a green-leaning cover for the industry’s continued covert operation — through dark money, phony front groups, false economics, and relentless exertion of political influence — to block meaningful climate safety progress.”

**House Oversight Ranking Member Raskin, in testimony delivered before the Budget Committee:** “During our probe, I've been struck by the parallels between big oil's aggressive denialism about climate change and the tobacco industry's suppression of the truth about tobacco addiction and the carcinogenic effects of smoking. More than 20 years ago, the DOJ brought a precedent shattering case against the cigarette companies. We learned about the massive decades-long disinformation campaign waged by big tobacco, and the companies were ordered to cease and desist their propaganda and to start telling the truth. ... We're beginning to see comparable efforts to hold big oil accountable for its own industrial sabotage of the truth and accountability. State AGs across America, along with dozens of municipalities and tribal governments, have brought lawsuits against the companies and their trade associations to recover huge public damages allegedly caused by injuries made possible by their alleged deceptive trade practices, fraud, public nuisance, and civil conspiracy, to name just a few causes of action we've identified.”

**National media reacts to bombshell new evidence of Big Oil’s denial, disinformation, and doublespeak:**

**The Washington Post:** [What a years-long probe of Big Oil reveals about its climate strategy](#)

- “Some of the world’s largest oil companies have privately expressed skepticism of the Paris agreement, federal climate regulations and their own goals of reaching “net zero” emissions by mid-century, even as they publicly voiced support for these efforts, according to documents that congressional Democrats released Tuesday. The documents also detail industry efforts to fund university research into the environmental benefits of natural gas. They were obtained by Democrats on the House Oversight and Accountability Committee and the Senate Budget Committee as part of a years-long investigation.”

- “One 2018 exchange shows an ExxonMobil executive downplaying the impact of the Paris agreement on the company’s plans for continued fossil fuel production. The oil giant in 2015 voiced support for the landmark agreement, which calls for limiting global warming to ‘well below’ 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) and ideally to 1.5C (2.7F). But Pete Trelenberg, Exxon’s manager of environmental policy and planning, wrote that these targets should not influence internal decision-making on exploration and production of oil and gas.”
- “The documents could add fresh evidence to climate litigation against oil companies in courtrooms across the country. Eight states, dozens of municipalities and the District of Columbia have sued fossil fuel firms for allegedly misleading the public about the climate damage they knew their products would cause.”

**NBC: [Democrats say Big Oil misled public for decades about climate change](#)**

- “Major oil companies have misled Americans for decades about the threat of human-caused climate change, according to a new report released Tuesday by Democrats in Congress. The 65-page report was the result of a three-year investigation and was made public hours before a Senate Budget Committee hearing about the role that oil and gas companies have played in global warming.”
- “Democrats’ investigation revealed research, transcripts and even video recordings that show the fossil fuel industry knew the consequences of its emissions since at least the 1960s. Their report also showed how oil and gas companies initially tried to hide that information but employed new tactics to downplay the urgency of eliminating emissions.”

**The Guardian: [Big oil spent decades sowing doubt about fossil fuel dangers, experts testify](#)**

- “The fossil fuel industry spent decades sowing doubt about the dangers of burning oil and gas, experts and Democratic lawmakers testified on Capitol Hill on Wednesday. The Senate budget committee held a hearing to review a report published on Tuesday with the House oversight and accountability committee that they said demonstrates the sector’s shift from explicit climate denial to a more sophisticated strategy of ‘deception, disinformation and doublespeak.”
- “‘Big oil had to evolve from denial to duplicity,’ said Sheldon Whitehouse, the Rhode Island Democrat, who chairs the Senate committee. The revelations, based on hundreds of newly subpoenaed documents, illustrate how oil companies worked to greenwash their image while fighting climate policy behind the scenes.”

**Axios: [Democrats unveil Big Oil report after 3-year investigation](#)**

- “The joint 66-page report from the Senate Budget and House Oversight Committees claims some of the largest oil companies have internally acknowledged since the 1960s that fossil fuels cause climate change.”
- “The industry has portrayed natural gas as a climate-friendly bridge fuel while ‘internally acknowledging that there is significant scientific evidence that the lifecycle emissions from gas are as bad as coal,’ the report says.”

- “The report also says the fossil fuel industry has relied on trade organizations like the American Petroleum Institute (API) and the Chamber of Commerce to lobby against action on climate change.”

**The Hill: DOJ should prosecute Big Oil like it did tobacco industry, former federal litigator tells Senate**

- “The federal government should take legal action against the petroleum industry, as it once did against Big Tobacco, a former federal litigator told the Senate Budget Committee on Wednesday. Major oil and gas companies have misled and endangered the public in a manner similar to the tobacco industry, said Sharon Eubanks, a former Justice Department lawyer who led the racketeering lawsuit against the tobacco industry in the mid-2000s, arguing those actions deserve to be sorted out in court.”
- “[The bicameral] investigation cited internal documents from oil and gas companies in its findings that the industry had sought to slow-walk or reverse action to protect the climate even as company leaders publicly announced their support for climate goals. The report included documents that showed fossil fuel insiders seemingly admitting ways their industry had suppressed research on the dangers of burning oil and gas — even as they publicly insisted they had done no such thing.”