

# End Polluter Welfare

Today Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont along with Keith Ellison of Minnesota and others said at his side said, "I am proud to be here today with Congressman Ellison, with my good friend and fellow Vermonter Bill McKibben, with Brent Blackwelder from Friends of the Earth and Ryan Alexander from Taxpayers for Common Sense.

We are here today not just to announce new legislation, but to send a message - and that message is that it is time to end the absurdity of taxpayers providing massive subsidies to hugely profitable fossil fuel corporations. In these difficult economic times, it is imperative that we support the taxpayers of this country and not the fossil fuel industry - one of the most powerful special interests in the world."

Our federal government is set to give away over \$110 billion in taxpayer dollars to the oil, gas, and coal industries over the next 10 years. That is totally absurd. When we have a \$15.6 trillion national debt, we cannot afford it. When the five largest oil companies have made over \$1 trillion in profits in the last decade, they don't need it. When some of these same polluters have, in a given year, paid zero in federal income taxes and actually received IRS rebate checks worth millions, they don't deserve it. When fossil fuels are the number one source of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, creating a planetary crisis of global warming that is already causing devastating extreme weather disturbances, we can't ignore it.

As people throughout our country are demanding that we invest in energy efficiency and sustainable energy, and when Congress has instead allowed key sustainable energy incentives to expire even as Big Oil reaps billions in subsidies, it is time to change our national energy priorities. So today, Congressman Ellison and I are introducing the End Polluter Welfare Act in the House and the Senate.

Our legislation is the most comprehensive ever-introduced on this subject. It ends all the tax breaks, the special financing arrangements, and the federal research and development funding. We reform royalties to ensure that fossil fuel corporations pay their fair share. We ensure that never again can a company like BP take a tax deduction for money it spent cleaning up the disaster that it caused in the Gulf of Mexico. And we close the loophole that lets tar sands oil pipeline operators avoid paying the oil spill clean-up tax.

In 1936 on the eve of his first re-election President Franklin D. Roosevelt said of the big financial interests "they had begun to consider the Government of the United States as a mere appendage to their own affairs." Well we know that today, especially in a new era of unlimited corporate campaign spending with Citizens United, the fossil fuel industry also considers our government their servant, and they spend enormous sums on lobbying and campaign contributions to keep it that way. All over this country the American people are angry and frustrated with a government beholden to the big money interests. They want their elected officials to stand up for the needs of working families and the environment, not the powerful special interests.

The American people are asking: how can it be that at a time when so many in Congress are calling for savage cuts to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, when they tell us that we can't afford to invest in wind, solar, geo-thermal and other clean and sustainable technologies, that we somehow can afford to continue pumping tens of billions in taxpayer dollars into hugely profitable fossil fuel corporations?

People are sick and tired of seeing the same folks who want to cut nutrition programs for hungry children, fight tooth and nail to preserve federal tax breaks that go to Exxon-Mobil - one of the most profitable corporations in history. They think it is obscene that you have members of Congress who are taking huge campaign contributions from the coal industry and then turn around to argue we should allow coal plants to spew more toxic mercury pollution, even as that mercury is causing brain damage to infants and asthma for kids in Vermont.

Further, for all of us who understand global warming is real, and understand that the fossil fuel industry has led a decades-long smear campaign against climate science and scientists, we know that the fossil fuel industry is making huge profits at the expense of our children and grandchildren and the future of our planet. So if you agree that it is time to end the polluter welfare, we need your help. If you think that it's time to change our energy priorities, we need your help. Please sign up on my office's website to be a citizen cosponsor of this bill. Please help us create a grassroots movement that demands that Congress finally say NO to Big Oil and Big Coal, NO to the waste of billions in taxpayer dollars - and YES to energy efficiency, sustainable energy and the protection of our planet.