

The University of Tennessee Uses Our Taxes to Advocate Radical Energy Agenda. I Took Them to Court



by Kathleen Marquardt

April 20, 2024

Over four years ago, someone sent me a November 2019 *Huffington Post* article titled “Coal Knew, Too” by Élan Young, a writer for the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of (UTK). The story, remarkably, also promptly appeared in *Mother Jones*, the UK’s *Daily Mail*, and even in an article from the Kent Law School. We were told that the Department head, Chris Cherry, “accidentally discovered what is, so far, the earliest known evidence of the coal industry acknowledging its awareness of the impending climate crisis”.

The supposed “confession”, which fit nicely into an ongoing activist litigation campaign, appeared in plain sight in a 1966 article in the *Mining Congress Journal*. This general-interest mining publication merely repeated the theory of greenhouse global warming.

“Coal Knew, Too” is a spin-off of the activist campaign “Exxon Knew” “conceived during a 2012 [workshop](#) [1] in La Jolla, Calif., sponsored by wealthy, anti-fossil fuel foundations (including the Rockefeller Family Fund), where activists

strategized about how to replicate the success of the lawsuits against “Big Tobacco” by “[establishing accountability for climate change damages](#).” That soon became [Utilities Knew Too](#) [3] to rope in coal.

The first entrant in the litigation sweepstakes was the New York Attorney General. Public records show the Rockefeller Family Fund lobbied New York to prosecute. Interestingly, the New York Attorney General’s Exxon Knew fraud case bombed – big time. And made significant headlines for it, two examples:

New York Post editorial board: ” [“New York AG’s office totally disgraced itself in the Exxon trial”](#) [4]

Paul S. Atkins, a former member of the Securities and Exchange Commission, said, “[NY’s pathetic case against Exxon is outrageous abuse of prosecutorial powers](#).” [5]

Journalist Katie Brown at [Energy in Depth](#) [6] put it best in an article she called, “Feeling the heat, inside climate news finally admits #exxonknew collusion between AGs and activists”:

*“Over the past several weeks, the well-funded, highly orchestrated #ExxonKnew campaign has continued to be exposed for what it is, with several **major news outlets** now reporting on closed-door meetings that took place between activists, wealthy foundations, law firms, and media websites, in an effort to attack Exxon. Newly revealed **emails** even show these activists held secret talks with the state attorneys general long before articles written by Inside Climate News and the Columbia School of Journalism were published – directly contradicting claims made by the attorney general of New York and others that those articles were the impetus behind their actions.”*

“Coal Knew, Too” was absurd on a few fronts, but the campaign is a serious one. Regardless, this involved the UTK professor and a UTK writer using their positions and the school’s

website to launch the “Coal Knew!” branch of the campaign, checking that box of a media push against one class of defendants, the “Knew, Too!” tort bar is suing to extract billions and turn into lobbyists for the “climate”/energy-rationing agenda. How this use of the public/taxpayer’s resources came about is found in public records, and the public has a right to know what is in them.

So, I sent a request to Professor Cherry seeking emails containing one or more of three keywords/phrases: 1. Mining Congress Journal, 2. Coal, and 3. Climate change. These would reveal the record of how this came about on the taxpayers’ dime.

I submitted the request on December 4, 2019, and it became a seemingly never-ending ride on the MTA. After numerous delays in responding, my request “was denied in its entirety.” My lawyer went back and forth with the UTK over this for months, getting delays and, finally, another denial, even though the Tennessee Code gives entitlement to access to public records.

The University forced me to sue to see them, and here we are more than four years later, still trying to gain access to the school’s participation in Left-wing activism based on false premises.

Why would I want to see these documents? What business is it of mine? As a candidate for president once said, “I paid for this microphone.” The emails would inform the taxpayer 1) how and why the engineering school sought to use taxpayer resources to promote an ideological plaintiffs’ and media campaign in a breathless write-up pitched to outlets worldwide. This seems to me to be outside of the school’s norm. Don’t you think? 2) This is all based on the silliest of premises – a trade journal article acknowledging the existence of the greenhouse warming theory.

Let’s look at the article that drew my attention – and ire,

"Coal Knew, Too". The first paragraph set the tone (and turned on my "woke-wacko" alert):

"'Exxon Knew'. Thanks to the work of activists and journalists, those two words have rocked the politics of climate change in recent years, as investigations revealed the extent to which giants like Exxon Mobil and Shell were aware of the danger of rising greenhouse gas emissions even as they undermined the work of scientists."

That raises the question, "Which scientists?" As one article in the literature wrote: *"Whether most scientists outside climatology believe that global warming is happening is less relevant than whether the climatologists do. A letter signed by over 50 leading members of the American Meteorological Society warned about the policies promoted by environmental pressure groups. 'The policy initiatives derive from highly uncertain scientific theories. They are based on the unsupported assumption that catastrophic global warming follows from the burning of fossil fuel and requires immediate action. We do not agree.'* Those who have signed the letter represent the overwhelming majority of climate change scientists in the United States, of whom there are about 60. McMichael and Haines quote the 1995 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which is widely believed to "prove" that climate change induced by humans has occurred. The original draft document did not say this. What happened was that the policymakers' summary (which became the "take home message" for politicians) altered the conclusions of the scientists. This led Dr. Frederick Seitz, former head of the United States National Academy of Sciences, to write, "In more than sixty years as a member of the American scientific community ... I have never witnessed a more disturbing corruption of the peer-review process than the events that led to [this IPCC report](#)."

 [7]

In 1966, when the article from the *Mining Congress Journal* was written, global warming was not a hot issue. That was global

cooling – or, better said, global freezing. Even as late as 1977, greenhouse warming was not a political campaign but a theory, as mentioned in many places, including a ten-year-old trade journal article. The book *The Weather Conspiracy: The Coming of the New Ice Age* was a bible of environmentalists then. So, what will be the next “threat to society from those wanting to control the world? They are still operating under the Club of Rome’s philosophy: *“The common enemy of humanity is man. In searching for a new enemy to unite us, we came up with the idea that pollution, the threat of global warming, water shortages, famine, and the like would fit the bill. All of these dangers are caused by human intervention, and it is only through changed attitudes and behavior that they can be overcome. The real enemy, then, is humanity itself.”*

Public institutions must never be allowed to stonewall public records requests from the taxpayers who fund them. Free speech and full disclosure are the path to sound science, reason, and logic.

This article was Initially published at CFACT

© 2024 Kathleen Marquardt – All Rights Reserved

E-Mail Kathleen Marquardt: koikpm@yahoo.com

Sources:

1. <https://eidclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/La-Jolla-Climate-Report-June-2012.pdf>
2. <https://eidclimate.org/before-the-verdict-is-in-we-can-already-say-the-exxon-knew-campaign-failed/>
3. <https://energyandpolicy.org/utilities-knew-about-climate-change/>
4. <https://nypost.com/2019/11/09/new-york-ags-office-totally-disgraced-itself-in-the-exxon-trial/>
5. <https://nypost.com/2019/11/06/nys-pathetic-case-against-exxon-is-outrageous-abuse-of-prosecutorial-powers/>
6. <https://www.energyindepth.org/feeling-the-heat-insidecli>

[mate-news-finally-admits-exxonknew-collusion-between-ags-and-activists](#)

7. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1112950/>