

March 24, 2020

Dear Congressperson,

As our nation suffers from the novel coronavirus pandemic, the fossil fuel industry is trying to cash in on Congress' emergency relief legislation. The Senate Republican proposal would open the door to billions in handouts to coal, oil and gas companies and fossil fuel-intensive industries, instead of providing relief directly to the people who desperately need it. This is beyond outrageous. On behalf of our millions of supporters and members, we request that you exercise your authority to protect people, not polluters. We insist that you focus all legislation on emergency relief and a just recovery, and that you refuse to support any bill that gives money to fossil fuel corporations. We call on you to advance real solutions that follow the Five Principles for Just COVID-19 Relief and Stimulus,<sup>1</sup> and further demand that you pass emergency legislation that responds to the call of the people for leadership as follows.

**Legislation must focus on combating the coronavirus pandemic and providing emergency relief directly to the people and communities who need it.**

We support proposals that provide wage replacement directly to workers who have lost their jobs and to those working drastically reduced hours — with no strings attached and no means testing — rather than proposals that give away the people's money to some of the world's largest polluters. We support proposals that ensure high-quality healthcare and paid sick leave for all people, and that strengthen unions and enhance critical protections for workers. The people cannot afford a repeat of the 2008 financial crisis, where the plight of ordinary people was an afterthought while corporations and corporate boards received outlandish financial handouts. As explained by nearly 600 organizations in a separate letter,<sup>2</sup> Congress must protect at-risk Americans by immediately instituting a nationwide moratorium on all electricity, water, and other essential utility shut-offs--a problem that disproportionately impacts low-wealth households, especially in communities of color and American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

**There must be absolutely no funding for fossil fuel executives and shareholders or that would promote fossil fuel production or infrastructure.**

The fossil fuel industry already receives billions in subsidies. Fossil fuel executives have always sought to maximize their profits at the expense of people and planet. As the world's largest polluters, they have held back progress for far too long by blocking policies that would have

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<sup>1</sup> See "Five Principles for Just COVID-19 Relief and Stimulus": <https://www.thepeoplesbailout.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/energy-justice/pdfs/Signon-Letter-re-Coronavirus-and-Electricity.pdf>

provided just and sustainable energy alternatives to fossil fuels. This moment presents a historic opportunity to provide long-term economic security for fossil fuel workers and fossil fuel-dependent communities; follow the best available climate change science in transitioning rapidly away from all fossil fuel production and use; and hold fossil fuel polluters accountable.

The people do not support hand-outs of any kind to fossil fuel polluters. All tax breaks, credits or trickle down schemes that give money to fossil fuel corporations rather than workers; waivers or suspensions of environmental, health, and safety laws; low-interest loans and loan guarantees; purchases into or expansion of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve; royalty relief; new subsidies; and any additional giveaways must be stripped from the relief legislation. In addition, we oppose any efforts to bail out large fossil fuel corporations by allowing these companies to qualify for the Senate's proposed \$425 billion slush fund that supports an "eligible business" for loans or loan guarantees.

As explained by over 200 organizations in a separate letter,<sup>3</sup> any relief to the airline industry must be conditioned on requiring airlines take necessary steps to ensure the safety of our climate, impacted workers, and affected communities. The airline industry's greenhouse gas pollution cannot be effectively or fairly addressed through the use of offsets, net zero targets, or through the promotion of today's unsustainable biofuels. Congress must require all airlines which receive relief funding to adopt all aviation emissions reductions technology and practices available today, and compel the industry to modernize through strong, technology-forcing regulations towards zero emissions over time.

The same principles apply to any relief to massive foreign cruise ship corporations that pollute our environment, take advantage of tax loopholes, and flag ships in foreign countries. Any bailout should be focused on providing relief to impacted workers and affected communities, not the industry itself, and must ensure the industry does not return to business as usual.

**Funds should be provided for investment in zero emissions, sustainable energy technologies and equitable programs that will support healthy communities free of pollution.**

Once the emergency phase of novel coronavirus response has passed, Congress must turn its attention to spurring a sustainable and just economic recovery that provides the solutions needed to respond to the scale of the economic and climate emergencies. The novel coronavirus pandemic is in many ways analogous to the disruptions that the climate crisis will, and has already, caused. Stimulus and recovery funds must be directed toward sustainable and renewable technologies and equitable and democratic programs as part of a planned phaseout of fossil fuel production that will provide long-term protections for the workers and communities who have

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<sup>3</sup> [https://biologicaldiversity.org/programs/climate\\_law\\_institute/pdfs/Aviation-bailout-sign-on-letter\\_3.19.2020.pdf](https://biologicaldiversity.org/programs/climate_law_institute/pdfs/Aviation-bailout-sign-on-letter_3.19.2020.pdf)

powered our economy for decades and empower communities, especially Black and Indigenous communities and communities of color, in a sustainable and just economy.

To give just a few examples, funds should be provided for massive investment in sustainable and renewable energy and decentralized, democratic sustainable energy systems like community solar, microgrids, and priority grid access for renewable energy. These systems are vital so that people whose electricity is now cut off by utilities will no longer need to rely on dirty centralized power, increasing their resilience in crises like these and the climate emergency--as supported by nearly 600 organizations.<sup>4</sup> Unprecedented financing must also be directed to transforming our dirty transportation system through subsidizing all electric buses, rail cars, and other zero-emissions public transport that serves the people who need it most. This must also include not only subsidizing the electrification of ferry systems and domestic commercial shipping, but also the buildout of renewable shore power infrastructure in our nation's ports. This must be done in tandem with nation-wide electric vehicle charging and other infrastructure to speed the manufacturing and deployment of electric vehicles, including for freight and heavy duty vehicles. Funds should also be provided to create nation-wide energy efficiency programs to retrofit the buildings sector.

As discussed below, these technology investments must also be made with equal investments in people, where training programs and support for unions and high-road labor standards will help create dignified, family-sustaining jobs.

The just transition off of fossil fuels will also create life-saving health benefits due to the reduction in air and water pollution and other harms from these dirty fuels. And in many jurisdictions, renewable energy today is at cost parity or even substantially cheaper than fossil fuels. Consumers will thus benefit tremendously from the shift to clean, renewable energy.

**Recovery funds should provide long-term security in the just and equitable energy transition for fossil fuel workers and communities economically dependent on fossil fuel production.**

The oil and gas industry is already undergoing inevitable decline — a volatile boom and bust cycle out of our control. Global uncertainty, oil price instability, COVID-19 and the resulting economic downturn are only exacerbating the industry's recent history of debt accrual and mismanagement. Oilfield workers already face layoffs — a preview of hardships to come if the transition to a clean energy future is not well-managed. The need has never been greater for a

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/energy-justice/pdfs/Signon-Letter-re-Coronavirus-and-Electricity.pdf>

thoughtful, robust plan to manage the energy transition while protecting impacted communities, workers, and their families.

In addition to the emergency relief provided to all workers whose livelihoods are threatened during the coronavirus pandemic, we call on Congress to provide long-term support for workers in the oil, gas, and coal industries while managing the transition away from fossil fuels. We can better protect oil, coal, and fracked gas workers for the long haul by investing in a just, collaborative, and deliberative transition to a sustainable economy. While we create millions of dignified, family-sustaining jobs in climate protection, not extraction, Congress must ensure that every worker displaced in the energy transition is provided with wage replacement and guaranteed pensions and benefits, opportunities for alternative quality employment, relocation assistance, the option of age-appropriate retirement, and other assurances they can continue to provide for their families in the move to an economy beyond fossil fuels. Communities that rely on tax revenue from fossil fuel production to provide critical public services must also not be left behind, and should receive tax base replacement assistance.

We must also hold fossil fuel companies accountable to meet their existing obligations to their workers. Fossil fuel companies must be required to fulfill wages and pension obligations, pay to clean up pollution and revitalize the communities in which they operate, and protect existing labor contracts and uphold obligations to their workers, retirees, communities, and the environment in bankruptcy proceedings.

### **Congress must ensure stimulus plans protect the economy from the risks of climate change.**

The people demand accountability. Leadership must avoid the relaxation of rules on financial institutions. Weakening standards will impact our ability to weather future crises, particularly the climate crisis. Congressional leadership must avoid a backdoor bailout for the fossil fuel industry. Instead, policymakers should be bolstering the resilience of the financial system to protect the people from the climate shock that is barreling towards us. Policymakers should refrain from further deregulation of the financial industry and implement new regulations to protect the economy and the American public from the climate crisis.

In order to prepare the economy to weather the coming climate crisis, the US government should require banks, asset managers, and other financial institutions to phase out financing for and investments in fossil fuels and support the transition to a green economy. Leadership should ensure that any proposed legislation does not rollback requirements to disclose climate-related risk (or efforts to create those requirements) and does not eliminate requirements to undertake climate-related stress tests (or efforts to create those requirements).

Congress must take all of the actions described herein to protect the people of the United States. These actions will also help address our country's responsibility, as the world's largest greenhouse emitter, to redress the legacy of global injustice from fossil fuel extraction and use that disproportionately impacts countries in the Global South.

Thank you for your consideration,

1. Center for Biological Diversity
2. Climate Hawks Vote
3. Corporate Accountability
4. Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice
5. Earthworks
6. Fire Drill Fridays
7. Food & Water Action
8. Friends of the Earth
9. Greenpeace USA
10. Hip Hop Caucus
11. Indigenous Environmental Network
12. Oil Change U.S.
13. Pacific Environment
14. Progressive Democrats of America
15. Publish What You Pay-US
16. Stand.earth
17. Sunrise Movement
18. The Climate Mobilization
19. Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN)
20. Zero Hour
21. 198 methods
22. 350.org
23. 350PDX
24. ActionAid USA
25. Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.
26. Animas Valley Institute
27. Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)
28. Athens County's Future Action Network (ACFAN.org, OH)
29. Azul
30. BeanCounters Unlimited
31. Biofuelwatch
32. Brighter Green
33. Catskill Mountainkeeper
34. Center for a Competitive Waste Industry
35. Center for Climate Change and Health
36. Center for Climate Change Communication, George Mason University
37. Center For Sustainable Economy
38. Central Maryland Beekeepers Association
39. CEO Pipe Organs/Golden Ponds Farm
40. Climate Defense Project
41. Co-op Power
42. Conservation Congress
43. Cooperative Energy Futures
44. Deep Green Resistance New York City
45. Dogwood Alliance
46. Earth Justice Ministries
47. Eco-Eating
48. Eco-Justice Collaborative
49. EcoWorks
50. Flight Free USA
51. Frac Sand Sentinel: Project Outreach
52. Frack Free Catskills
53. FracTracker Alliance
54. Fresnans against Fracking

55. Friends of the Bitterroot
56. Geos Institute
57. Grassroots Global Justice Alliance
58. Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association
59. Greater Brunswick PeaceWorks
60. Green Belt Movement International-NA
61. Green Door Initiative
62. GreenLatinos
63. Hammond Climate Solutions
64. Heartwood
65. In the Public Interest
66. Inspiration of Sedona
67. Institute for Policy Studies Climate Policy Program
68. Interfaith Oceans
69. LaPlaca and Associates LLC
70. Long Beach 350
71. Mothers Out Front
72. National Children's Campaign
73. No Coal in Oakland
74. No Sharon Gas Pipeline
75. Northern Jaguar Project
76. Nuclear Information and Resource Service
77. NYC H2O
78. Partnership for Southern Equity
79. Pelican Media
80. Peoples Climate Movement-NY
81. Physicians for Social Responsibility
82. Public Citizen
83. Public Lands Project
84. Rachel's Network
85. Rainforest Action Network
86. Riverdale Jewish Earth Alliance
87. Rogue Climate
88. Safe Skies Maryland
89. Samuel Lawrence Foundation
90. SanDiego350
91. SAVE THE FROGS!
92. Sequoia ForestKeeper®
93. Stone Quarry House
94. Sunflower Alliance
95. Sustainable Energy & Economy Network
96. Sustainable Upton
97. SustainUS
98. Syracuse Cultural Workers
99. The Climate Center
100. The Enviro Show
101. The Natural History Museum
102. The River Project
103. Topanga Peace Alliance
104. Transition Sebastopol
105. Tree San Diego
106. Turtle Island Restoration Network
107. Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth
108. University of Oregon Climate Justice League
109. Uplift
110. Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment
111. WATCH, Inc
112. Weather Medic Inc
113. Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club
114. WESPAC Foundation
115. WildEarth Guardians
116. WildWest Institute
117. 100Grannies.org for a Fossil Fuel Free Future
118. 350 Colorado
119. 350 Everett
120. 350 Sacramento
121. 350 Silicon Valley
122. 350 Triangle