

May 20, 2020

Dear Vice President Biden,

On behalf of our organizations and the millions of members they represent, we write to ask you to commit to address the unprecedented corporate bailout contained in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (“CARES Act”) that could artificially support the fossil fuel industry in the years to come.

In January 2021, should you win the election, you will be faced with the challenge of advancing your priorities on climate change despite the reckless support fossil fuel industries have enjoyed from the Trump administration and Congressional Republicans. The massive fossil fuel bailout included in the CARES Act adds to the billions in federal subsidies that were already propping up the most environmentally damaging industries in the history of humanity prior to the pandemic. Accordingly, we call on you to publicly lay out your plan of action to undo the damage the Trump administration will likely cause over the next nine months by bailing out the fossil fuel industry from its past, pre-coronavirus mistakes.

The fossil fuel industry’s business-as-usual has set up the conditions for the massive inequities in health outcomes we are witnessing unfold through this coronavirus crisis. For example, one recent study shows that exposure to even small increases in PM_{2.5} pollution is associated with a 15% greater chance of dying from COVID-19.¹ Combined with systemic racism in our society, black and brown people are dying at disproportionate rates from the pandemic.

At a time when workers and communities need relief the most, President Trump has chosen to prioritize corporations and their executives over the lives of those most in need. Everyday people will face the fallout of this decision for years to come. Should you win the election in November, it is incumbent on you to put forward a just and transformative plan for reshaping the economy into one that is regenerative, sustainable and puts everyday people ahead of corporate profits.

Within moments of signing the CARES Act, President Trump issued an accompanying statement effectively gutting most oversight of Secretary of the Treasury Mnuchin’s allocation of over \$400 billion in nearly condition-free loans to any large corporation in the United States. Despite the fact that the oil, gas and coal industries face an inevitable decline due to financial mismanagement prior to the pandemic and the rise of cheaper and cleaner renewable energy alternatives, they will likely benefit more than any other industry because Secretary Mnuchin will have virtually unfettered discretion in loaning billions — which will be leveraged to trillions — to the fossil fuel industry.

Specifically, we request that you scrutinize each loan authorized by Secretary Mnuchin and the Federal Reserve for any fossil fuel company to ensure that loan applicants have not defrauded the people of the United States by using CARES Act loans to pay off pre-existing debt or misstating

¹ <https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/covid-pm>

their liabilities including, but not limited to, those caused by their climate-damaging activities. If fossil fuel companies misstate facts in any loan application, they should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and held responsible for injunctive relief, including financial compensation, for any harm done to the public. All companies that misstate facts in a loan application should also be subject to a full audit and barred from any future leases, contracts, loans and other forms of financial or tax-related support approved by the federal government.

Furthermore, we request that you evaluate the *behavior* of all of the fossil fuel companies that receive loans for the remainder of 2020. For example, in March and April of 2020, Administrator Wheeler announced an EPA rule that would allow polluters to stop monitoring their emissions — something that is clearly in conflict with the standing Clean Air Act. If a company receives bailout funding, it should be scrutinized for whether it complied with environmental safeguards during the time it receives any financial relief.

Likewise, each company should be examined to determine if it provided workers full sick and paid leave, full protective equipment for essential workers to keep them safe, and did not otherwise take punitive action against vulnerable workers or workers attempting to form unions. Should it be proven that any fossil fuel company violated any law while relying on public funding, then that company should again be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Developing a comprehensive oversight and transparency plan for the people of the United States will be vital in ensuring that the largest corporate giveaways in history are fully rectified. We also call on you to commit to working with communities on the frontlines of pollution and this public health crisis to implement a just and equitable recovery that invests in the health and well-being of those who have borne the brunt of the impacts. As the presumptive presidential nominee for the Democratic party, it is incumbent upon you to lay out your plans to allow voters and the public to make informed decisions as to whether they are sufficient and in the best interest of the people.

Sincerely,

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| 1. American Family Voices | 12. Massachusetts Peace Action |
| 2. California Young Democrats | 13. National Children's Campaign |
| 3. Center for Biological Diversity Action Fund | 14. Oil Change U.S. |
| 4. Climate Hawks Vote | 15. People's Action |
| 5. The Climate Mobilization | 16. Progressive Democrats of America |
| 6. Dēmos Action | 17. Sunrise Movement |
| 7. Earth Action, Inc. | 18. Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club |
| 8. Earthworks Action Fund | 19. Zero Hour |
| 9. Food & Water Action | 20. 350 Action |
| 10. Friends of the Earth Action | 21. 350 Bay Area Action |
| 11. Greenpeace, Inc. | |