

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 5, 2018

His Holiness, Pope Francis
Apostolic Palace
00120 Vatican City

Your Holiness:

Thank you for your inspiring moral leadership on climate change, and for the Papal encyclical *Laudato si'*, which has brought hope to people around the world.

As you meet next week at the Vatican with oil industry executives to discuss climate change, I wish to bring to your attention the discrepancy, among those oil companies who do substantial business in the United States, between their public-facing statements and their political and lobbying activity as regards the United States Congress.

Many of the oil companies with which you will be meeting are fond of saying, in essence, “we know climate change is real; we know our product causes it; and we support a price on carbon as a solution.” As the primary author of the United States Senate’s carbon-pricing legislation, I can assure you of the absence of any support from the large oil companies. If they supported my bill or one like it, or were even engaged to amend or improve such a bill, I would likely know.

More regrettably, through groups that front for the fossil fuel industry in Congress, these companies maintain a powerful political opposition to any meaningful climate legislation. Groups like the American Petroleum Institute, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and others have been employed as adversaries of meaningful climate legislation, in some cases with little apparent support for their opposition from the majority of the companies that make up their membership.

These industry advocacy groups often obscure the sources of their funding, but the likeliest explanation is fossil fuel industry money buying their hostility to climate action. The International Monetary Fund puts the annual subsidy for the fossil fuel industry, in the United States alone, at \$700 billion per year, so obstruction of climate legislation (such as a price on carbon) is a highly remunerative activity for this industry.

In this, they join an array of front groups supported by a network of secretive, ultra-rich industrialists, many of whom are massive players in the fossil fuel industry and who have as their primary mission obstructing climate legislation in order to protect their fossil fuel business interests. This network runs both lobbying and political operations to block climate action from behind this screen of front groups.

I wish I could tell you that all was sunshine and daffodils in the United States Congress. I wish I could tell you that, with the whole world watching and so much on the line for those who live closest to the Earth, American democracy was operating in a healthy way to solve this problem. But on this matter, it is painfully evident that the oil industry is duplicitous in its public-facing

statements as it remorselessly schemes through proxies and agents to obstruct in the United States Congress the very progress it claims to seek.

The inaction you see in Congress is their result. I wish I could deliver you happier news.

I close with profound thanks again for your moral leadership to protect our common home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Whitehouse', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator