



**Our nation’s addiction to Oil—and the influence of oil companies on domestic and foreign policy—fundamentally affects the health of our communities, global warming, war, human rights abuse, national security, and debt and poverty in developing countries. Oil companies have made record profits despite the increase in the price of crude oil while gas prices have hit record highs. But what’s good for Exxon, Chevron, and others is not necessarily good for the rest of us. It’s time to ensure that our representatives represent us, not the oil companies.**

***It’s time for a separation of oil and state.***

For too long, representatives have been prioritizing the needs of the oil industry over the needs of the people. We need to hold our representatives accountable for their receipt of monies from, and actions on behalf of the oil industry. It’s important that we demand that our representatives stand up for the future of energy, not for the dinosaurs of the oil industry.

Hybrid cars, biodiesel, energy efficiency, and wind power are economically viable technologies today—and yet our politicians continue to use our tax money to subsidize and support Big Oil to the tune of billions of dollars every year. The first step in ending our collective addiction to oil is reducing oil’s influence over our politicians and demanding political independence from Big Oil.

The oil industry wields their wealth in Washington in

many ways. Lobbying expenditures and ad campaigns for the oil industry amount to hundreds of millions of dollars annually. But the most direct route is campaign contributions. Big Oil has donated more

than \$65 million to politicians since 1998. While the majority of representatives receive donations, the largest donations are given to a select few in key leadership positions. Roughly 75% of all donations during this time have gone to Republicans—although many Democrats receive oil money as well.

We need to demand that our representatives represent us, not the oil industry—ask your representatives to immediately stop taking campaign contributions from Big Oil. It won’t end the oil industry’s influence overnight—but it’s a start, and it can be done today.

<i>Member of Congress</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Donations</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Kay Bailey Hutchison	R	S	TX	140,911	1
Tom Delay	R	H	TX	112,490	2
Rick Santorum	R	S	PA	110,050	3
Joe Barton	R	H	TX	109,450	4
Conrad Burns	R	S	MT	101,575	5
George Allen	R	S	VA	92,500	6
Dennis Hastert	R	H	IL	92,000	7
John Cornyn	R	S	TX	86,000	8
Richard Pombo	R	H	CA	66,200	9
James M. Talent	R	S	MO	63,150	10

**Table 1. Top 10 Republican US Congressional recipients of campaign contributions from the oil industry in 2006 and the amount of donations. Data from Center for Responsive Politics.**

<i>Member of Congress</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Donations</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Dan Boren	D	H	OK	40,700	22
Henry Cuellar	D	H	TX	29,350	38
Jeff Bingaman	D	S	NM	28,750	40
Ben Nelson	D	S	NE	28,500	41
Tom Carper	D	S	DE	18,090	58
Gene Green	D	H	TX	16,750	61
Edward M. Kennedy	D	S	MA	15,100	66
John D. Dingell	D	H	MI	15,000	67
Ben Cardin	D	H	MD	14,600	69
Solomon P. Ortiz	D	H	TX	14,500	73

**Table 2. Top 10 Democratic US Congressional recipients of campaign contributions from the oil industry in 2006 and the amount of donations. Data from Center for Responsive Politics.**

## Impacts of Our Oil Addiction

### *Global Warming*

Oil and gas account for over one third of all global greenhouse gas emissions. Climate scientists are now predicting a need for reducing global emissions of carbon dioxide by 90% by 2050 in order to stop global average temperatures from rising to dangerous levels. Global warming threatens virtually every segment of the biosphere and human society. Polar ice and mountain glaciers are already melting, leading to rising sea levels, while at the same time climate fluctuations are bringing increasingly severe droughts, floods and storms around the world.

### *War*

The Iraq war is only the latest example of decades of US military involvement and covert action in oil producing regions. Since the 1973 Arab oil embargo, successive US administrations have equated national security with access to, and control of, oil—particularly in the Persian Gulf, which holds two-thirds of global oil reserves. As long as we need oil, we need the Persian Gulf. Faced with this unpleasant fact, every President since Carter has chosen to defend US “access” to the Persian Gulf through force. “Regime change” in Iraq would ensure long-term availability of Iraqi oil for US industry and consumers.

### *Human Rights*

There is an alarming record of human rights abuses by governments and corporations associated with fossil fuel operations, resulting in forced relocation, and the brutal and sometimes deadly suppression of critics. Scholars have examined the relationship between corruption, authoritarian governments, governance, conflict, and extractive industries, and have found strong evidence for a “repression effect,” which holds that resource wealth retards democratization by enabling the government to better fund the apparatus of repression.

### *Health and Local Environment*

Oil production generates profound damage to local communities and their environment: forest clearing, toxic waste, gas flaring, oil spills, and release of deadly dioxins. From 1988–98, over 15 million kilometers of lines were cut, resulting in significant biodiversity loss in sensitive ecosystems such as rain and cloud forests of the Amazon and the mangroves of the Niger Delta. In the Ecuadorian Amazon, Texaco deforested 2 million acres, spilled 16.8 million gallons of crude oil and dumped 30 billion gallons of carcinogens and toxic wastes onto the land and into rivers and streams over a 30-year period ending in 1992.

### *Debt, Poverty, and the Resource Curse*

Countries dependent on mineral exports, particularly oil, suffer from high rates of poverty, malnutrition, child illiteracy, corruption, authoritarianism, civil war, and indebtedness. In 2001, the World Bank commissioned Dr. Emil Salim to conduct an Extractive Industries Review to determine what impacts the Bank’s support of extractive industries had on alleviating poverty in developing countries. Surprisingly, after conducting the study, Dr. Salim recommended the World Bank phase out support for oil within five years. Unsurprisingly, the World Bank rejected the recommendation despite their failure to provide a single example where their support for an oil project had alleviated poverty.

### *Gas Prices and Corporate Profits*

Rather than addressing America’s oil addiction in any real way, politicians of both parties are reacting to skyrocketing gas prices as an opportunity to score political points, blame environmental regulations and increase the supply of oil by potentially opening up ANWR and relaxing regulations on refineries. Representatives are long on rhetoric condemning corporate profits and CEO payrolls, and short on action. In the short-term, a windfall profits tax is the best alternative to alleviate pain at the pump, and in the long-term, weaning the US off its addiction to oil is the only solution. Neither is likely to happen as long as Washington is in Houston’s back pocket.

## Take Action

America needs a tune-up. It’s time for an Oil Change. The dirty oil money gumming up our political system must be removed. Once its gone, the possibilities for a sound economy, clean energy, peace, and real security will be much brighter.

**Find out how much your  
representatives are taking from  
Big Oil and send them a quick  
email by visiting:**

**[www.priceofoil.org](http://www.priceofoil.org)**

