

Déjà vu: as with tobacco, the climate wars are going to court

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Investigative journalism has uncovered a [“web of denial”](#) in which polluting industries pay “independent” groups to disseminate misinformation to the public and policymakers. The same groups and tactics were employed first by the tobacco industry, then fossil fuel companies. Big Tobacco has been to court and lost; now it’s Big Oil’s turn. Political leaders are choosing sides in this war.

[Research by Inside Climate News](#) revealed that Exxon did top notch climate science research in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which revealed the dangers its products posed via climate change. Soon thereafter, Exxon launched misinformation campaigns by funding “think tanks” and front groups to manufacture doubt about climate science and the expert consensus on human-caused global warming.

Koch Industries, [Peabody Energy](#), and other fossil companies have similarly funneled vast sums of money to these groups.

Now 17 state attorneys general, led by New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, have [formed a coalition to investigate ExxonMobil’s activities](#). As Schneiderman put it: *The First Amendment does not give you the right to commit fraud.*

Last century, we saw a similar battle with tobacco. [By the 1950s, the tobacco industry knew that its products caused cancer](#) and other diseases. They still marketed their harmful products to children, and soon created pseudo-academic institutes like the Council for Tobacco Research to cast doubt on smoking’s damage. However, the institutes’ connections to the tobacco industry were too obvious; they wanted “independent” voices.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2016/jul/18/déjà-vu-as-with-tobacco-the-climate-wars-are-going-to-court>