



# Public Health for Community Power Coalition



[publichealth4communitypower.org](http://publichealth4communitypower.org)



# A Just and Equitable Future



We serve as a bridge, connecting public health organizations with community power-building campaigns.



Offer our specialized skills and public health expertise to amplify the voices of those on the front lines.

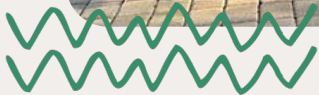


Learn more about us and how to join [publichealth4communitypower.org](https://publichealth4communitypower.org)





# Coalition Objectives



- Build relationships and shared learning spaces with public health groups and community power building orgs/networks
- Strengthen partnerships among public health organizations committed to community power
- Increase public health NGOs' skills in community organizing, advocacy, & supporting campaigns
- Show up together for advocacy guided by community partners
- Create a shared space for public health work focused on racial, gender, economic, & environmental justice

# Panelists



**Tia Williams**  
APHA



**Sara Zimmerman**  
Earth Island Institute



**Sara Shor**  
Fossil Free Media



**Betsy Lawton**  
Network for Public  
Health Law





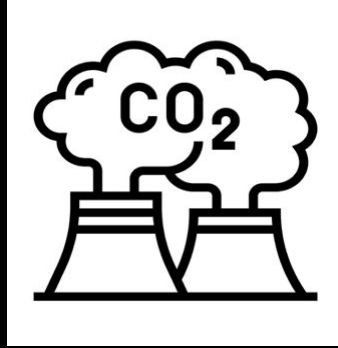
# Making Polluters Pay is Important for Public Health

**Tia Williams, MPH, CNS, LDN (she/her)**  
Director, Center for Public Health Policy  
[Tia.Taylor@apha.org](mailto:Tia.Taylor@apha.org).

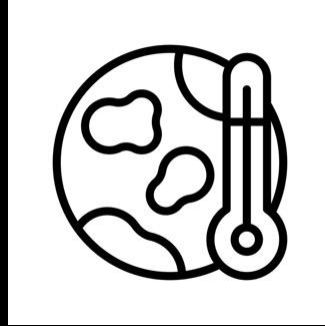
June 23, 2026



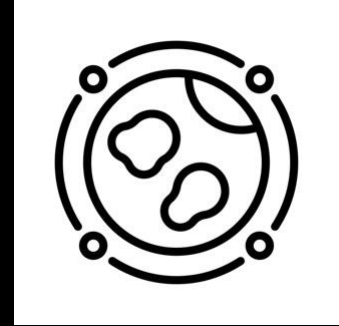
# What Causes Climate Change?



**When we burn fossil fuels, such as coal and gas, we release CO<sub>2</sub>**

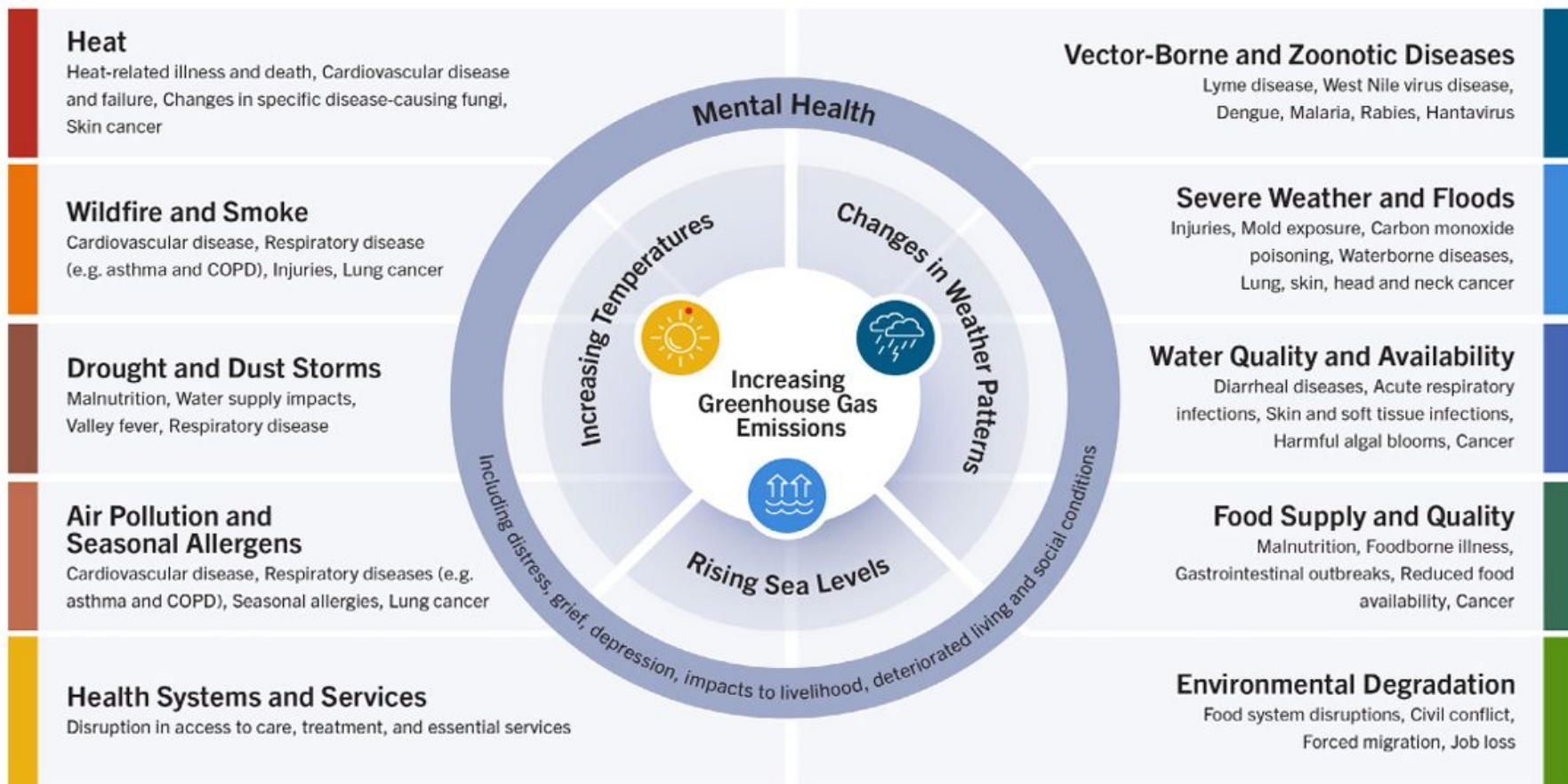


**CO<sub>2</sub> builds up in the atmosphere, causing average global temperatures to rise**



**The extra heat disrupts many of our planet's natural systems, causing more change**

# Climate Change Impacts on Health



## COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Some communities of color living in risk-prone areas face cumulative exposure to multiple pollutants.

Adaptation plans that consider these communities and improve access to healthcare help address social inequities.



## OLDER ADULTS

Older adults are vulnerable to extreme events that cause power outages or require evacuation.



Checking on elderly neighbors and proper emergency communication can save lives.

## CHILDREN

Children have higher risk of heat stroke and illness than adults.



Adults can lessen risk by monitoring exertion and hydration.



## LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES

Low income families are at risk of physical and mental illnesses during flooding and in crowded shelter conditions.



Comprehensive disaster management can improve resiliency for people with limited resources.

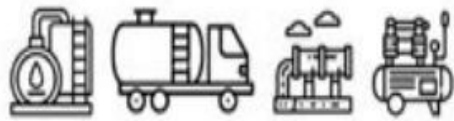


# Fossil Fuels Harmful to Health at Every Stage



## Exploration and production

On- and off-shore drilling, flaring, solid and liquid waste



## Transport, storage and processing

Storage tanks, transmission compression stations, transportation



## Refining, distribution, transmission

Refineries, oil and gas pipelines

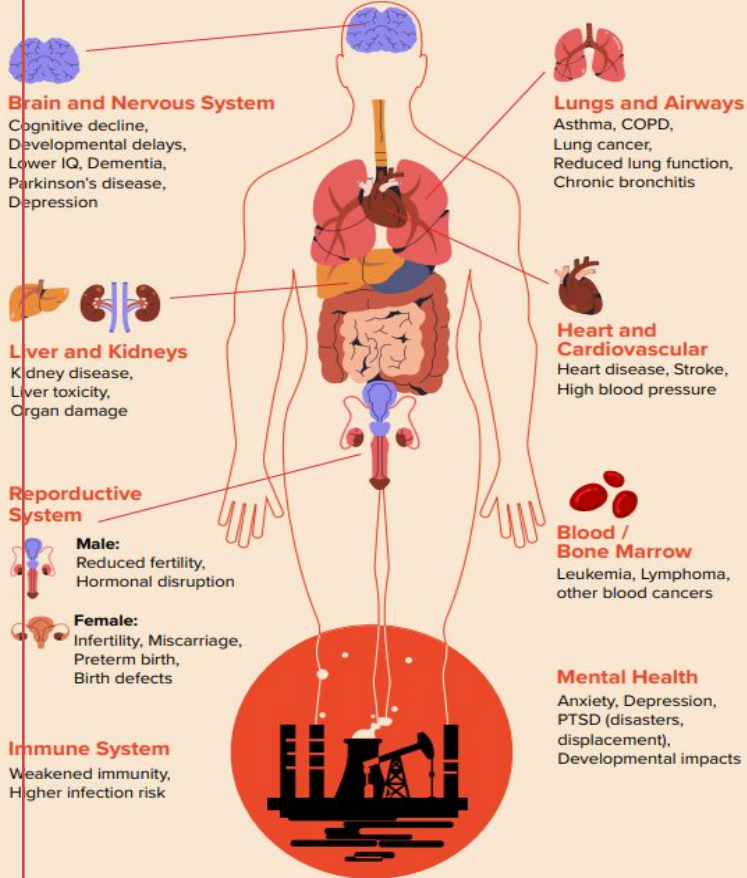


## Combustion and end use

Power plants, buildings and appliances, vehicles

# FOSSIL FUEL HARMS ON THE HUMAN BODY

GLOBAL  
CLIMATE & HEALTH  
ALLIANCE



- Everyone is exposed
- Accumulates in our bodies over time
- Affects every stage of human life

# Fossil Fuels Harm Some More than Others



- Children
- Low-income
- Communities of color
- Unhoused
- Disabled
- Workers

# Fossil Fuels Pollution Has Many Costs

- Fossil fuel air pollutions kills 1 in 5 people globally each year
- **~5 to 8 million deaths each year**
- **~350,000 premature deaths in U.S.**
- 216,000 cases of childhood asthma
- 10,000 preterm births each year
- **\$820 billion in health costs per year**



**Fueling Sickness:**  
The Hidden Health Costs  
of Fossil Fuel Pollution



- Developed by health and medical experts
- Endorsed by 12 national health organizations
- Highlights how fossil fuel pollution affects the health of Americans

# GRADLE TO GRAVE

The **Health Toll** of Fossil Fuels  
and the Imperative for a **Just Transition**



2nd Edition

- Global Climate and Health Alliance
- Endorsed by 12 national health organizations
- Maps entire fossil fuel lifecycle
- Examines effects across all body systems and stage of human life

**BREAKING**


Trump's EPA repeals the **endangerment finding**, leaving us less protected from climate pollution

**Trump Allies Near 'Total Victory' in Wiping Out U.S. Climate Regulation**

Health Experts Warn Americans Face Toxic Risks as EPA Abandons Health Protections

**BREAKING: Federal Bill Would Put Big Oil Above the Law**

**How Federal Attacks on Diversity and Inclusion Policies Have Dismantled Public Health Infrastructure and Threaten National Health Security**

 EARTHJUSTICE

# Public Health Can Help Hold Polluters Accountable

Fossil fuel industry caught taking a page out of the tobacco playbook



## Decades of Deceit

*The Case Against Major Fossil Fuel Companies for Climate Fraud and Damages*





# Polluters Pay Policies Legal Overview & Equity & Health Considerations

Sara Zimmerman  
Legal Director

# Roadmap

- Polluters Pay Laws: The Basics
- Structure of the Laws
- Health & Equity Considerations





# Earth Island Institute

- 45 year old environmental & environmental justice nonprofit located in Berkeley, CA
- Our work focuses on opportunities to improve conditions for humans and the natural world, with a focus on jointly improving health, environmental integrity & thriving
- 4 core areas of work: fiscal sponsorship, youth leadership, the Earth Island Journal, and our Advocates legal program
- We fiscally sponsor more than 65 grassroots projects, who work on a wide range of issues, including Indigenous land rights, plastic pollution, environmental education, sacred site protection, urban habitat restoration, community/land connections, and more



# Earth Island Advocates



- Earth Island Advocates is our legal program
- We engage in litigation and policy advocacy, often in close partnership with our projects
- Many of our lawsuits focus on the health, equity, and environmental harms from plastic
- Corporate accountability is a key theme in Earth Island's work generally, and plays out in our litigation and in our policy work

# **Polluters Pay Policies: The Basics**

## **Core Concept**

Polluters Pay laws require the massive oil and gas companies who are driving climate change harms to pay for the huge resulting costs to communities & government

# Overview

- **Key:** if a corporation causes damage/pollution, they must pay the costs of dealing with it
- **Strict liability, not negligence:** The costs are due simply because the companies caused the pollution, not based on any particular assertions about negligence or the legality or not of emissions
- **Climate Superfund:** These bills are sometimes also called Climate Superfund laws, after the popular toxics federal superfund law
  - Similar principle of requiring polluters to pay for clean up
  - Approaches have similarities & differences

# To Date

- **A recent trend:**
  - Starting in 2022, Polluters Pay bills have been introduced in more than 12 states (including California, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, etc.)
  - Federal Polluters Pay Climate Fund Act has been introduced
- **Victory!** Vermont & NY State both passed polluters pay laws in 2024
- **Challenge:** Both immediately sued by fossil fuel industry and its allies in government

# **Polluters Pay Policies Structure of the Laws**

# How Do the Bills Work?

- **Cost Side:** The bills impose costs on polluters & collect money from them
  - Must determine a way to calculate the costs or damages of climate change & how those will be borne by polluters
- **Expenditure Side:** Applying the money collected to climate harms
  - Must determine how the money will be used & how that will be overseen

# Cost Side

- Who pays? Usually, only fossil fuel companies that generated over 1 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions over a given period (usually 2 or 3 decades)
- What costs & damages are covered? How are they calculated?
  - Fixed amount (e.g. NY's \$75 billion) versus study to calculate the amount
- How are costs allocated to the responsible parties & are all the costs included?
- When is payment due? all at once or over set time frame

# Expenditure Side

- Who department will oversee this work?
- How are qualifying expenses defined? Broadly climate related v. narrow set of authorized uses
- Just for adaptation or also mitigation?
- Are there restrictions on harmful expenditures?
- Specific earmarks versus general grants versus strategy/plan?

# Other Components

Bills can contain a range of other significant components:

- Reporting requirements
- Anti-preemption provisions: Clarification re effects on litigation/other laws (e.g. express statements that other laws & litigation are not preempted/interfered with)
- Enforcement penalties
- Interest/inflation charges (for installment payments or late payments)
- Labor standards: such as prevailing wage or employment goals (e.g. NY law)

**Polluters Pay Policies  
Health & Equity Drafting Opportunities**



# Why Health & Equity Considerations?

- Health & equity-related climate harms: often underestimated or ignored in climate policy
- We need to ensure:
  - Health & equity are fully addressed in polluters pay cost assessments
  - Health & equity are prioritized in spending & investing money raised
  - Policies are anticipating side effects/unintended consequences & avoiding related health & equity harms
- Big goal: design & implement policies that advance health and equity while addressing climate harms



# Health & Equity in Framing



- **Findings**

- Reference health harms & differential community needs in findings

- **Statement of purpose**

- Include equity language in the bill's statement of purpose
  - Maryland's bill states that one purpose is to “address the health impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations.”



# Health & Equity in Cost Assessment



- **Fossil fuel copollutants:**
  - Fossil fuel copollutants are core air pollutants (SO<sub>x</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, etc)
  - Can we include costs of fossil fuel copollutants in the costs addressed by the bills?
- **Including health:** How to fully/thoughtfully address health costs, given lack of certainty?
  - Be clear that there's not just one bite at the apple
  - Explicitly include health costs as part of the costs being assessed
  - In designing cost study, include a methodology advisory committee & require strong representation of health expertise



# Health & Equity in Qualifying Expenditures



## What is included in qualifying expenditures?

- **Climate adaptation, mitigation, & resilience:** mitigation is an essential health equity need & must be included
- **Healthy communities:** Explicitly authorize health as qualifying expenditure
- **Justice 40:** Language committing 40% or more of money to disadvantaged communities
- **False solutions:** Restrict or prohibit use of Polluters Pay funds for activities that continue harms to frontline communities, such as carbon capture & sequestration



# Other Aspects of Health & Equity in Expenditures



- **Plan:** Require development of community informed spending plan to ensure strategic use of expenditures to address climate & safe, healthy, and just communities
- **Community leadership:** Create empowered climate justice advisory committee to direct/give input into expenditures
- **Community grants:** Provide cycles of grant funding for community groups, not just state agency efforts
- **Health department leadership:** Health department management/oversight of expenditures/grant programs

## **Conclusion**

- These policies provide a tremendous opportunity to fund enormously expensive adaptation & mitigation strategies we need to survive
- Language in the laws & implementation matter – for how much money is raised, what loopholes exist, equity impacts, and more
- Must frame health & equity components as core pieces
- Fossil fuel companies see these bills as existential – we need to be prepared for a fight



Sara Zimmerman  
Legal Director, Project Network  
[sara@earthisland.org](mailto:sara@earthisland.org)

# Public Health for Community Power Coalition

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How communities are impacted by  
fossil fuels and organizing around  
health and climate superfund.

Sara Shor

Make Polluters Pay/ Fossil Free Media

June 23, 2026

MAKE  
**POLLUTERS**  
PAY

HUMPS

# The Climate Crisis is Here

- In recent years, we've seen Hurricanes Helene, Milton, LA fires, storms across the midwest, heat waves and floods all across the country.
- California Natural Resources Agency estimates that climate disasters will cost California at least **\$113 billion annually** by 2050, but recent storms show this number is only growing.
- **Los Angeles fires (2025):** \$250 billion in estimated damages, thousands displaced.
- **Extreme heat costs:** \$7.7 billion in losses from heat events from 2013-2022

BUSINESS

Estimated cost of fire damage balloons to more than \$250 billion



Residents search for belongings in the remains of their burned-out homes in Altadena on Tuesday. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

[Read the LA Times article](#)

THOSE COSTS ARE BEING PAID AT  
THE LOCAL LEVEL – DRAINING STATE  
AND CITY BUDGETS, HURTING  
SMALL BUSINESSES AND  
COMMUNITIES.



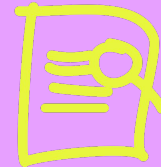
**HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS ARE**   
**PAYING TOO, WITH HIGHER INSURANCE**  
**PRICES OR THE COST OF REBUILDING**  
**AFTER EXTREME WEATHER.**



**INSURANCE IS A PARTICULARLY  
ACUTE RISK, WITH COMPANIES  
PULLING OUT OF STATES AND THE  
ENTIRE MARKET AT RISK.**



**CLIMATE IMPACTS ALSO DRIVE UP THE  
COST OF FOOD, HEALTHCARE, ENERGY,  
HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE, TAXES...  
THE LIST GOES ON AND ON.**



**THIS IS AN EJ ISSUE:  
PEOPLE ALREADY  
FINANCIALLY AND  
ENVIRONMENTALLY  
BURDENED ARE FEELING  
THESE COSTS FIRST AND  
WORST— AND IT'S ONLY  
GOING TO GET WORSE.**

CLIMATE SCIENCE ENVIRONMENT

## Babies born this year face a **\$500,000** climate bill



A sign warns of elevated fire danger in the Oakland Hill area of Oakland, California, on Thursday, October 29th, 2020. Photo by Philip Pacheco / Bloomberg via Getty Images.

/ Cost of living expenses in the US skyrocket in a hotter world, but it's not too late to change that.

by [Justine Calma](#)  
Apr 16, 2024, 12:11 PM EDT

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# Impacts of Fossil Fuel Industry in **Communities**

- Fossil Fuels are a direct threat to public health
  - Fossil Fuel pollution is responsible for between 5-8 million deaths each year, including an estimated 350k premature deaths in US alone.
- Health impacts begin early and are cumulative
  - Cause 216,000 cases of childhood asthma
  - 10,000 preterm births each year
  - Air pollution exposure before birth affects developing brain and increases risks of autism, ADHD, behavioral problems, lowered IQ, reduced academic performance.
- Pollution is linked to heart and lung disease, cancer, adverse reproductive outcomes, neurological disorders
- **Everyone in US is harmed by fossil fuel pollution, but harms are not equal.**
  - **1 in 5 Black Americans live within a half mile of a oil or gas production, processing or storage facility.**
  - **Unhoused people, people who work outdoors, and people who work in the industry have higher exposure**
- Health costs of fossil fuel pollution are substantial



# CLIMATE SUPERFUND BILLS WORK LIKE THIS:



**1.** Calculate climate damages to the state

**2.** Ascribe those damages to the fossil fuel companies most responsible

**3.** Collect the funds and use them for climate resiliency programs



## QUESTIONS

# Where would the money go?

Collected fees would go to state-managed funds for climate resilience projects, mitigation, adaptation, and just transition support, prioritizing frontline communities, low-income neighborhoods, and communities of color.

States like New York are collecting up to \$75 billion, while the federal legislation collects \$1 trillion.



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## How is this an environmental justice policy?

Low-income and BIPOC communities bear the brunt of climate impacts: they're paying the costs, while polluters profit.

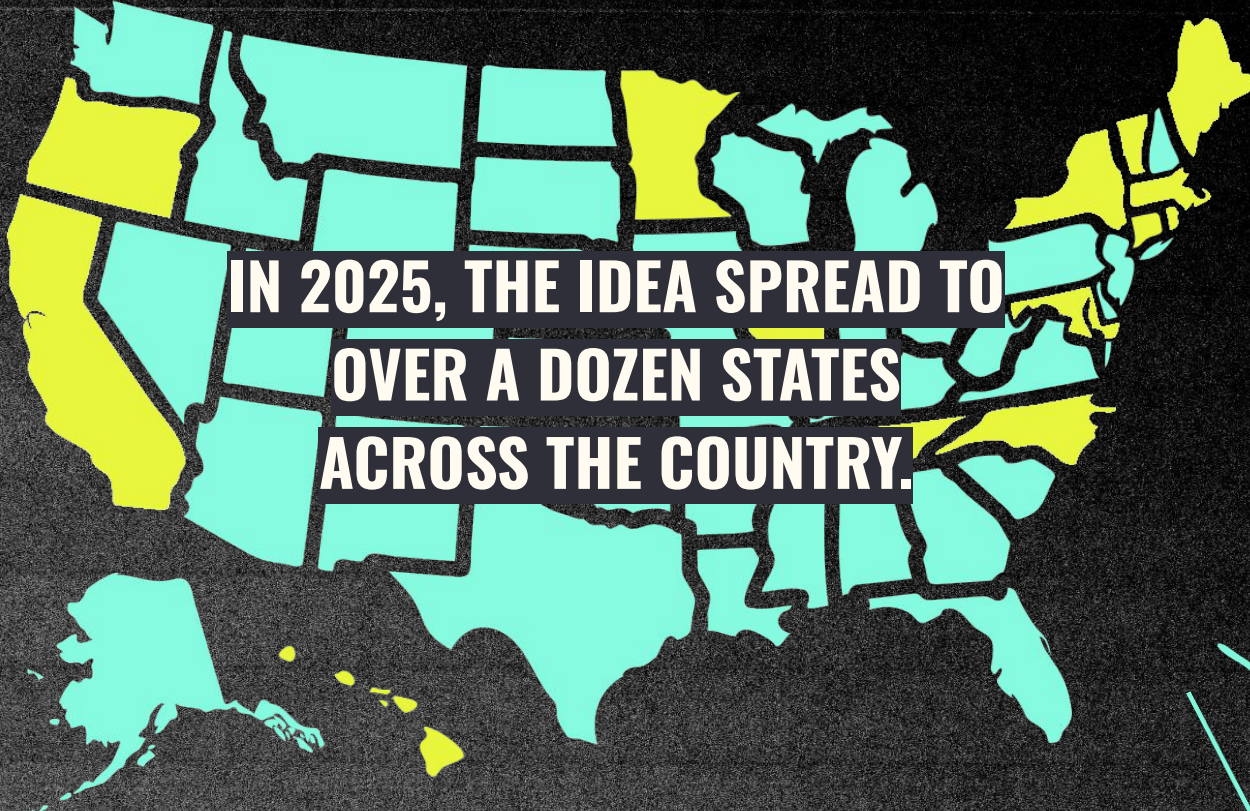
The climate superfund proposals direct 35-40% of the funding raised to environmental justice communities. There are also opportunities to make more targeted investments.



**IN MAY 2024, VERMONT BECAME  
THE FIRST STATE TO PASS A  
CLIMATE SUPERFUND BILL.**

**IN DECEMBER 2024, NEW  
YORK STATE SIGNED ITS OWN  
BILL INTO LAW.**





**IN 2025, THE IDEA SPREAD TO  
OVER A DOZEN STATES  
ACROSS THE COUNTRY.**

**IN 2026, WE'RE WORKING TO ADVANCE CLIMATE SUPERFUND BILLS IN EACH STATE – BILLS ARE STILL ALIVE AND MOVING IN NEW JERSEY, MINNESOTA, AND ILLINOIS. WE COULD SEE MORE BILLS PASS THIS YEAR OR EARLY NEXT YEAR.**



# THERE'S A GROWING MOVEMENT



# The national campaign continues to grow

- There are active Make Polluters Pay Campaigns dozens of states
- Dozens of municipal resolutions have been passed in support of Make Polluters Pay campaigns in geographies representing millions of people
- Coalitions are broad, and big spanning health to youth to EJ to faith and everything in between.



## Health & Frontline Organizing

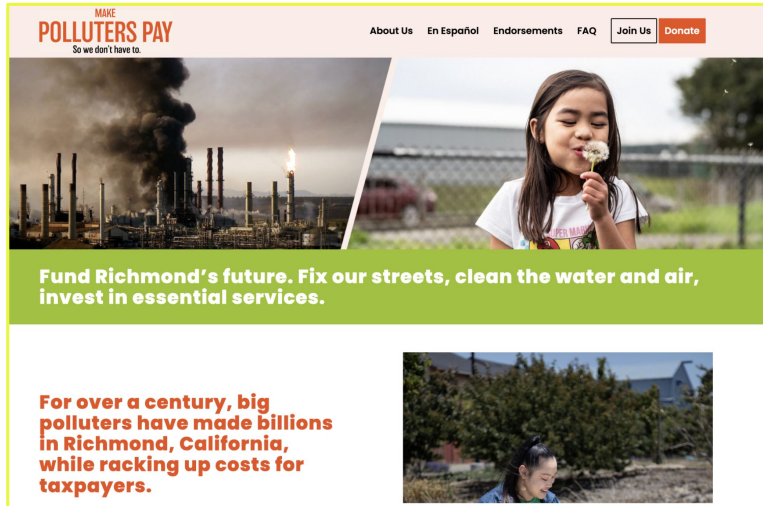
- All of the states with active climate superfund campaigns are working with public health groups or professionals.
- PSR LA organizing communities in LA who have experienced the impacts of the fossil fuel industry and climate disasters.
- Oregon working with several health professional and public health professional groups and economic justice- coalition is huge.
- Illinois led by EJ groups that have organized in the southside of Chicago for decades.
- Massachusetts- coalition has grown to include several health organizations and EJ groups that have been fighting for health equity for years.
- NY- EJ and public health groups were key to getting the bill passed.
- Health voices are great validators and are important in legitimizing and getting these bills passed.
- Richmond- longtime organizing against the Richmond refineries first ones to test this concept with their campaign



[Read the LA Times article](#)

# Make Polluters Pay Campaigns Work!

Richmond, CA Make Polluters Pay Campaign website



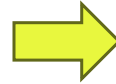
MAKE POLLUTERS PAY  
So we don't have to.

About Us En Español Endorsements FAQ Join Us Donate

**Fund Richmond's future. Fix our streets, clean the water and air, invest in essential services.**

**For over a century, big polluters have made billions in Richmond, California, while racking up costs for taxpayers.**

The screenshot shows a website header with navigation links and a main banner. The banner features two images: an industrial refinery with smokestacks on the left and a young girl blowing a dandelion on the right. Below the banner is a green bar with white text, and further down is a white box with red text and a small image of a woman looking at a plant.



CALIFORNIA

## California city's \$550m deal with Chevron could be a national model for environmentalists

California environmentalists have a new playbook for beating Big Oil.



The news article snippet includes a sub-header 'CALIFORNIA', a main headline, a sub-headline, and a photograph of an industrial refinery with smokestacks and a flare.

# THESE IDEAS ARE POPULAR!

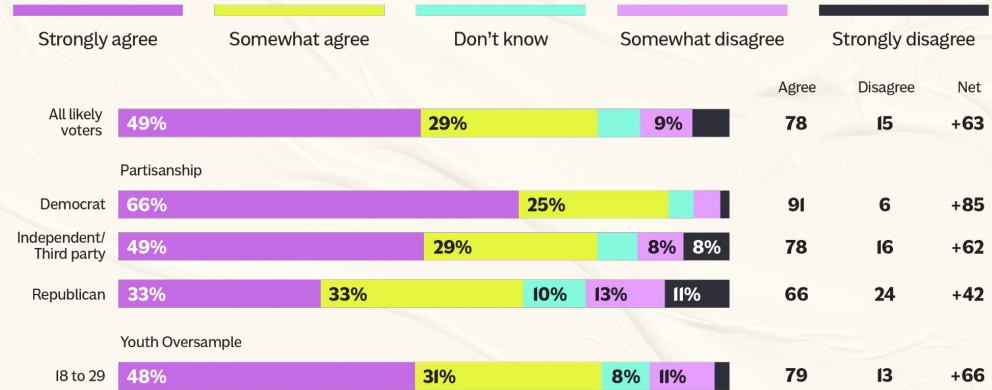
# 78%

of voters agree that oil and gas companies should be held accountable for climate damages.

## A Majority of Voters Agree That Oil and Gas Companies That Misled the Public Should Be Held Accountable

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

*"Oil and gas companies that knew about the polluting impact of burning fossil fuels, but that intentionally misled the public about it, should be held accountable."*



February 2-5, 2024 survey of 1,451 likely voters

DATA FOR PROGRESS



# AND THE SUPPORT IS BIPARTISAN

big majorities of

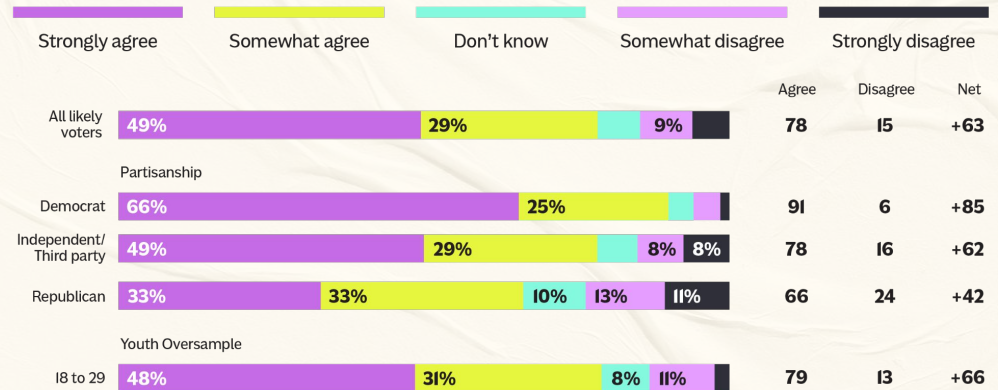
**DEMOCRATS,  
INDEPENDENTS +  
REPUBLICANS**

all support this  
approach.

## A Majority of Voters Agree That Oil and Gas Companies That Misled the Public Should Be Held Accountable

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

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February 2-5, 2024 survey of 1,451 likely voters

DATA FOR PROGRESS 

# AND SUPPORT IS GROWING

An August 2025 poll found that

**77%**

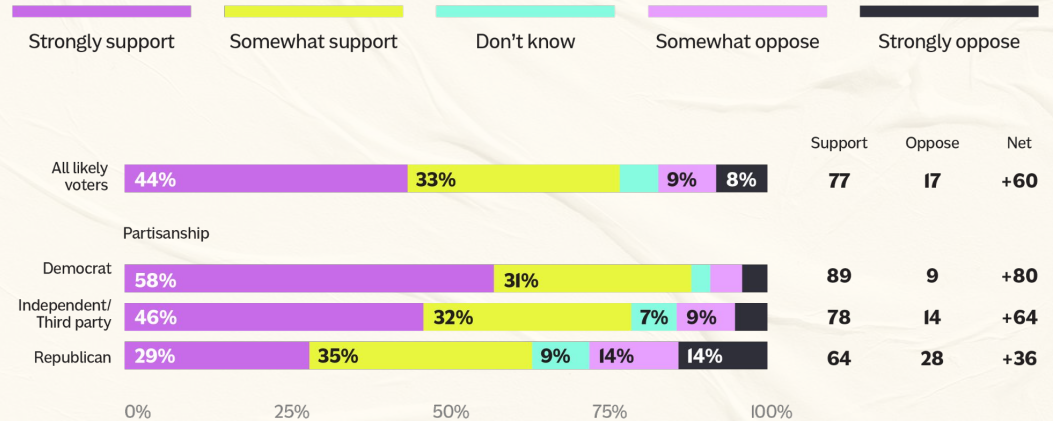
of likely voters support climate superfund legislation – up from


**66%**

a year earlier.

## Voters Support Climate Superfunds To Hold Polluters Accountable And Rebuild Communities

Some lawmakers are considering a "climate superfund" bill that would require oil and gas companies to pay a share of the cost of climate damages caused by their pollution. Would you support or oppose a "climate superfund" bill that would require oil and gas companies to pay a share of the cost of climate damages caused by their pollution?





In a moment when climate change and health impacts are getting worse, the industry responsible for the pollution should pay the costs so communities don't have to.

***MAKE POLLUTERS PAY FOR THEIR MESS.***



**The Network**  
for Public Health Law

# Making Polluters Pay: The Legal and Policy Context

June 23, 2026



# Reducing Public Health Threats of Climate Change

## **Mitigation:**

Actions to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

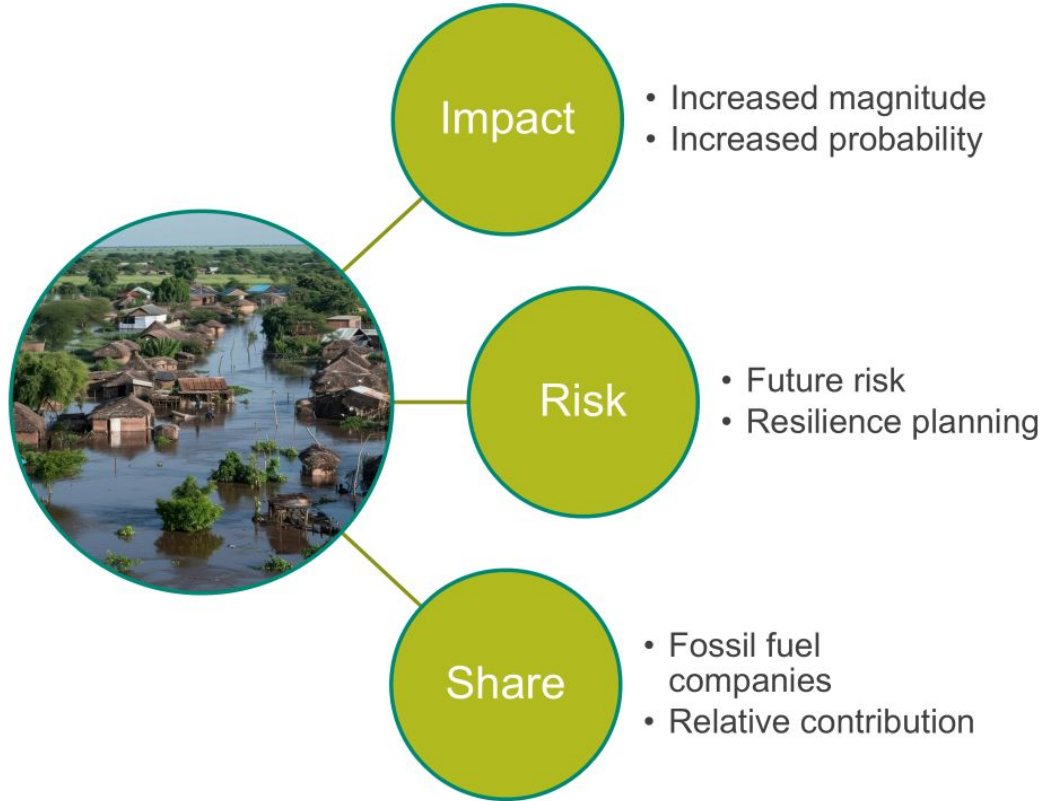
## **Adaptation:**

Action to help communities adjust to and moderate climate change induced threats

## **Resilience:**

Communities' ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate change induced threats, hazards, and disruptions

# Climate Attribution Science



# Accountability

- Polluter Pays
- Climate Superfund Laws
- Litigation





# Vermont and New York Superfund Laws: A Comparison

STATE	VERMONT	NEW YORK
CITATION	<a href="#">Vt. Stat. tit. 10, Ch. 24A</a> Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program (Enacted 2023, effective 1/1/2024; Amended 2025, effective 6/5/2025).	<a href="#">N.Y. 43-B, Article 76</a> Climate Change Adaptation Cost Recovery Program (Enacted 2024 and Amended 2025, Effective Date December 26, 2024).
COVERED PERIOD	1995 - 2024	2000 – 2024
RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	Extracted fossil fuel or refined crude oil; and responsible for > 1 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions during the covered period.	Extracted fossil fuel or refined crude oil; and responsible for > 1 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions during the covered period.
COST RECOVERY AMOUNT	By 1/15/2027 State Treasurer to calculate incurred and projected costs to abate effects of covered greenhouse gas emissions on State and residents	\$75 billion
ALLOCATION METHODOLOGY	Responsible party share of cost recovery amount = responsible party's share of covered greenhouse gas emissions.	Responsible party share of cost recovery amount = responsible party's share of covered greenhouse gas emissions.
WHAT CAN BE FUNDED	Projects designed to respond to, avoid, moderate, repair or adapt to negative impacts caused by climate change, and to assist communities, households, and businesses in preparing for future <a href="#">climate change</a> -driven disruptions—could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nature-based solutions and flood protections;</li> <li>• upgrading stormwater systems;</li> <li>• defensive upgrades to transit systems;</li> <li>• preparation and recovery from extreme weather events;</li> <li>• preventative health care programs and medical care to treat illness or injury caused by the effects of climate change;</li> <li>• upgrades to electrical grid;</li> </ul>	Projects designed to avoid, moderate, repair or adapt to negative impacts caused by climate change, and to assist communities, households, and businesses in preparing for future climate change-driven disruptions—could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nature-based solutions and coastal protection;</li> <li>• upgrading stormwater systems;</li> <li>• defensive upgrades to transit systems;</li> <li>• preparation and recovery from extreme weather events;</li> <li>• preventative health care programs and medical care to treat illness or injury caused by the effects of climate change;</li> <li>• upgrades to electrical grid;</li> </ul>

## Opposition

- State Laws: Immunity for Fossil Fuels
- Federal Laws: “Stop Climate Shakedowns Act”
- Federal lawsuits to stop state litigation
- Lawsuits challenging VT and NY Climate Superfund Laws.



## What's Next



