

# Undercover Exxon video reveals an anti-climate campaign

By Matt Egan, [CNN Business](#)

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**New York (CNN Business)** A senior ExxonMobil lobbyist appears to have unwittingly revealed how the oil company uses its political muscle to undercut climate action.

"Did we aggressively fight against some of the science? Yes," Keith McCoy, the Exxon ([XOM](#)) lobbyist, said during a covertly filmed job interview recorded by Greenpeace's UK investigative platform.



Exxon uses Big Tobacco's playbook to downplay the climate crisis, Harvard study finds

"Did we join some shadow groups to work against some of the early efforts? Yes, that's true," McCoy said in the video, which was published Wednesday by the UK's Channel 4. "But there's nothing illegal about that. We were looking out for our investments. we were looking out for our shareholders."

- The footage seems to corroborate what many suspected all along: Exxon's public support for climate solutions at times conflicts with its work behind the scenes.

- For example, Exxon says it's in favor of a tax on carbon even though its lobbyist doubts it will ever get enacted.

"Nobody is going to propose a tax on all Americans. The cynical side of me says we kind of know that. But it gives us a talking point," McCoy said in the video. "We can say, 'What is ExxonMobil for? We're for a carbon tax.'"

The Exxon lobbyist added that a carbon tax "isn't going to happen" because it would take political courage. "That doesn't exist in politics. It just doesn't," he said.

# Exxon condemns statements in video

The report from Channel 4 did not allege Exxon or its lobbyists did anything illegal. After all, plenty of major corporations use campaign donations to shape the laws in their favor.

Exxon CEO Darren Woods responded to the footage by saying the comments "in no way represent the company's position" on climate policy and its commitment to carbon pricing.



Gas is above \$3 and it will go higher if OPEC doesn't act soon

"We condemn the statements and are deeply apologetic for them, including comments regarding interactions with elected officials," Woods said in a statement. "They are entirely inconsistent with the way we expect our people to conduct themselves. We were shocked by these

interviews and stand by our commitments to working on finding solutions to climate change."

Woods, who became CEO in 2017 after Rex Tillerson stepped down from the helm of Exxon to become President Donald Trump's secretary of state, also said the individuals in the footage "were never involved" in developing the company's positions on the issues discussed.

## **'He is the kingmaker'**

Yet during the video McCoy suggested he's very much involved in Exxon's efforts to influence key lawmakers. The Exxon lobbyist compared the influence campaign to fishing, where the company tries to "kind of reel them in." "Because they're a captive audience. They know they need you and I need them," McCoy said.

McCoy identified 11 US senators he says are "crucial" to Exxon, singling out Senator Joe Manchin, the moderate Democrat from West Virginia, as particularly important.

"I talk to his office every week. He is the kingmaker," McCoy said, adding that the Democrat is "not shy" about staking his claim early and changing the debate.

Manchin's office did not respond to a request for comment.

# Exxon lobbyist is 'deeply embarrassed'

In a [LinkedIn](#) post, McCoy apologized to his colleagues at Exxon and friends in Washington.

"I am deeply embarrassed by my comments and that I allowed myself to fall for Greenpeace's deception," McCoy said. "My statements clearly do not represent ExxonMobil's positions on important public policy issues. While some of my comments were taken out of context, there is no excuse for what I said or how I said it."

Asked if McCoy is still employed by Exxon, an Exxon spokesperson declined to comment, adding: "It is a private personnel matter."



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Climate activists used the undercover footage to pressure Congress and the White House to move swiftly to address the climate crisis by enacting a bolder infrastructure package than the bipartisan agreement reached last week.

"Companies like Exxon spent decades sowing doubt about the science of climate change. Now it seems their lobbyists worked to deter climate solutions from being included in a potentially planet-saving infrastructure package," Janet Redman, climate campaign director at Greenpeace USA, said in a statement on Thursday.

## **Another setback for Exxon**

Lindsay Meiman, US communications manager at climate group 350.org, said in a statement that the Exxon footage shows how "Exxon's climate lies have spanned from outright denial to puppeteering our government and economy."

The tapes are the latest blow to Exxon as pressure mounts on Washington and Wall Street to address the climate crisis.

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Last summer, Exxon was kicked out of the exclusive Dow Jones Industrial Average following years of disappointing performance.

More recently, three Exxon-backed directors were ousted from the company's board following a bruising battle with an activist hedge fund that criticized Exxon's climate stance. The milestone proxy battle was the first at major US company where the case for change was built around the transition away from fossil fuels.