

# Social Action Committee

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News-Record of Maplewood-South Orange  
Record-Transcript of Orange and East Orange

Dear Editors,

We, the members of the Social Action Committee of the Ethical Culture Society of Essex County, are deeply concerned that fossil fuel use is damaging our climate and our health here in Essex County, New Jersey. Money that is being invested in fossil fuel infrastructure (including highways that encourage the use of automobiles) should be invested instead in clean energy and public transportation, including an improved rail system.

Because of our belief that it is our responsibility to live an ethical life in this world and leave it a better place for future generations, we are deeply concerned about the use of fossil fuels in New Jersey.

We applaud State Attorney General Matt Platkin and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and the New Jersey Department of Consumer Affairs (NJCA) for joining several other states in a lawsuit against Exxon Mobil, Shell Oil, Chevron, BP, Conoco Phillips and the American Petroleum Institute. The suit alleges that the defendants have known for decades that the use of fossil fuels is a major cause of climate change, the consequence of which is sea level rising, flooding, and extreme weather conditions resulting in catastrophic damage and costly remediation for New Jersey and other states.

However, at the same time, the New Jersey Public Pension System has invested heavily in fossil fuel companies. Prior to the war in Ukraine, the value of fossil fuel investments declined, making a strong case for divesting with both climate and financial benefits. This summer, with the price of oil high, investments have regained value.

What to do? We have asked the Governor and our state legislators to work to continue the Pension Fund's divesting itself of fossil fuel investments. Legislation to do this, Bill S416/A1733, is currently in the budget committee. We urge everyone to write and call to help pass this bill and to divest the Public Pension System of its fossil fuel investments.

We are very clear that divestiture from fossil fuel companies and projects is the ethical thing to do. If we are to have any chance of holding temperature increases due to carbon emissions to 1.5 degrees C, we have to act now.

We also oppose seven fossil fuel related projects pending before state agencies. These projects are:

1. A fracked gas power plant in Keasbey, Woodbridge Township
2. The Passaic Valley Sewerage Treatment Power Plant in Newark
3. The NJ Transit fracked gas power plant in Kearny Meadowlands
4. Gibbstown Liquefied Natural Gas terminal (South Jersey)
5. Regional Energy Access Expansion (Williams Transco) in Branchburg and other towns
6. Tennessee Gas Pipeline Compressor Station in West Milford--pressurizes natural gas to transport it and risks methane gas explosions
7. The expansion of the New Jersey Turnpike in Jersey City.

Our future depends on taking action.

Sincerely,  
Meredith Sue Willis, Chair, Social Action Comm.  
Ethical Culture Society of Essex County