

Summary of Dr. Benjamin Franta's Report Supporting Multnomah County's Oppositions to Defendants' Motions to Strike and Dismiss

July 8, 2025

Introduction and Qualifications

Dr. Benjamin Franta submitted a [declaration and expert report](#) in support of Multnomah County's opposition to motions to dismiss and strike filed by fossil fuel industry defendants. Dr. Franta is a PhD in science history (Stanford) and applied physics (Harvard), as well as having earned a JD from Stanford. He presently is an associate professor at Oxford University. His report provides detailed evidence that major fossil fuel companies and affiliated trade associations were aware of the climate risks posed by their products as early as the 1950s, yet engaged in decades of deception, delay, and denial in order to continue selling their products and suppress efforts to transition to renewable energy.

Industry Knowledge of Climate Change

Franta's report documents how fossil fuel companies, including Exxon, Shell, British Petroleum, Chevron, and others, obtained clear internal scientific knowledge about the warming effects of carbon dioxide from the 1950s onward. Internal memos, reports, and correspondence demonstrate that these companies understood that unabated carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels would, among other catastrophes, heat up the planet, melt the polar ice caps, raise the sea level. Their own scientists warned management of this hazardous trajectory as early as 1960s and 1970s, but management chose to ignore those warnings and conceal them in order to addict consumers to fossil fuels. Their own scientists predicted over several decades the inter-relationship between emissions, atmospheric levels of CO₂ and global mean surface temperature with deadly precision and accuracy.

Public Deception Campaigns

Despite their internal knowledge, fossil fuel companies and trade groups such as the American Petroleum Institute (API) embarked on a coordinated campaign to mislead the public about climate change. Dr. Franta outlines how the industry funded front groups, produced misleading advertisements, and fabricated fake science in order to create both doubt and reassurance in the consumers' minds about the safety of burning fossil fuels. Key efforts included the formation of the Global Climate Coalition and the use of third-party 'experts,' funded by many of the

1Defendants, to cast uncertainty on well-established scientific findings and promote the consumption of fossil fuels.

Suppression of Climate Science

Dr. Franta explains that fossil fuel entities sought not only to spread misinformation but also to actively suppress or discredit legitimate scientific findings. The report highlights industry efforts to downplay the credibility of peer-reviewed studies and government assessments, discourage regulations, and sow confusion among policymakers and the public. This multi-billion campaign continued for decades and delayed action on climate mitigation, which in turn has driven up consumption and worsened the consequences.

Specific Industry Documents and Testimony

Dr. Franta provides extensive references to internal industry documents, including reports authored by Exxon scientists in the 1970s and 1980s, which explicitly acknowledged the role of fossil fuel emissions in driving climate change. He also references testimony given by oil executives before Congress and other forums that contradicted their companies' internal findings. The report includes detailed timelines showing the gap between what companies knew internally and what they communicated to the public and policymakers.

Impact of the Deception Campaigns

According to Dr. Franta, the fossil fuel industry's decades-long disinformation strategy delayed meaningful regulatory responses to climate change and led to greater emissions than would otherwise have occurred. Their effective and sophisticated campaign of deception, modeled after Big Tobacco, exacerbated the impacts of climate change at the local level, including in Multnomah County. Dr. Franta links the timing of public awareness, political inaction, and fossil fuel promotion to specific spikes in emissions and warming trends. He concludes that the harms suffered today are directly traceable to this campaign of delay, denial and greenwashing, which is intended to give consumers false assurance that the creators of the disaster are now the solvers.

Relevance to Multnomah County

Franta connects the industry's conduct to Multnomah County by emphasizing that local governments relied on accurate information about climate risks in their public planning and adaptation strategies. By spreading false and misleading information, the fossil fuel industry interfered with the County's ability to prepare for climate-related hazards such as the 2021 heat dome. Dr. Franta asserts that these harms were foreseeable and preventable had the companies disclosed what they knew

when they knew it decades earlier.

Conclusion

Dr. Franta concludes that the fossil fuel industry engaged in a deliberate, sophisticated, expensive and well-documented campaign to deny and delay climate action, despite possessing clear scientific knowledge about the dangers of fossil fuel emissions. His report supports Multnomah County's claims by providing historical context and documentary evidence showing defendants were fully aware of the catastrophic impact from using their products over 60 years ago but put profits over public safety and concealed their knowledge. Dr. Franta's findings underscore the foreseeability of the harms now being experienced by the County and the pivotal role that their misinformation played in exacerbating the climate crisis in Oregon and Multnomah County.