

Study: O&G companies reward US representatives who oppose environmental protections

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A combined team of researchers from Yale University and the University of Cambridge has found that gas and oil companies reward

U.S. lawmakers who oppose environmental protections by increasing campaign contributions. In their paper published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, the group describes their study of the money donated to politicians in the U.S. by gas and oil companies and what they found.

In the United States, corporations are allowed to donate money to politicians running for public office. Such funds are typically used to create advertisements to persuade voters to select the [politician](#) in the ads. Such donations are allowed as a vehicle for corporations and private citizens to express their support for a given candidate. But they can also be seen as rewards for past behavior. In this new effort, the researchers have found evidence that suggests gas and oil companies have been rewarding politicians who vote against policies that would undermine their ability to produce the gas and oil essential to their survival.

The [work team](#) involved analyzing campaign donation data for Congressional candidates over the years 1990 to 2018 and comparing what they found with voting records. Their goal was to determine if politicians were receiving funds because supporters agreed with their stance on issues, or as rewards for past voting behavior. To that end, they used scores from the League of Conservation Voters (LCV)—an environmental advocacy group. Scores from the group are meant to gauge the level of support for environmental protections by representatives in Congress.

The data showed that when gas and oil companies donated to candidates running for office, there were no discernible changes in LCV scores over the following term. But when they looked at terms during which there had been a 10 percent drop on average in LCV scores, donations by gas and oil companies increased on average by \$1,700 in the following election. This finding showed that representatives in Congress were being rewarded for voting against policies that would protect the

environment and be detrimental to gas and [oil companies](#).

More information: Matthew H. Goldberg et al. Oil and gas companies invest in legislators that vote against the environment, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2020). [DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1922175117](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1922175117)

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