

Chicago sues oil and gas companies for their role in contributing to climate change

February 21 2024, by Caroline Kubzansky, Chicago Tribune



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

The city of Chicago is suing five oil and gas companies and a trade group that represents them over their role in contributing to climate

change and its effects, arguing that the companies have misled the public about how the use of fossil fuels affects city residents' well-being.

The suit, filed Tuesday in Cook County Circuit Court, accuses BP, Chevron, Shell, ConocoPhillips, Exxon Mobil and the American Petroleum Institute of mounting a "climate deception campaign" about burning [fossil fuels](#) to protect their profits.

Chicago is the latest in a slew of government bodies taking [legal action](#) against fossil fuel distributors over how [climate change](#) has affected cities and states. Cities in California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, South Carolina and Puerto Rico have taken similar actions since 2017, according to a release from the Center for Climate Integrity.

Chicago, represented by its own attorneys and lawyers from Chicago firm DiCello Levitt and San Francisco firm Sher Edling, is not seeking a specific sum from the defendants. However, it is demanding they reimburse the city on the costs incurred from climate change-related events such as infrastructure and property damage.

Since 1980, Chicagoans have faced warmer winters, less ice coverage on Lake Michigan and other lakes, [heat waves](#), a decrease in snow and more heavy rain events as well as climate change-related damage to the city's infrastructure and housing, attorneys argue.

That damage has been greater "in low-income communities and communities that have historically experienced racial, social, health, and economic inequities," the lawsuit reads.

The suit also cited the finding that 2023 was the hottest year on record and points to predicted increases in extremely hot days.

To prepare for those forecasts and other weather events, Chicago must build new infrastructure to withstand more intense weather and fix damage that has occurred: the city plans to invest almost \$200 million to protect the city's most vulnerable areas from the results of climate change, the lawsuit said.

Attorneys argued in the filing that the companies have known for decades that their products would produce atmospheric warming.

The companies' subsequent efforts to retain the widespread use of fossil fuels in spite of that knowledge "drove up [greenhouse gas emissions](#), accelerated global warming, and brought about devastating climate change impacts to the city of Chicago," the suit said.

The lawsuit compares the companies' advertising efforts to those of the tobacco industry in response to public health research about the effects of smoking.

In parallel to the companies' own marketing efforts, the suit argues that the American Petroleum Institute helped run campaigns meant to sow doubt about the causes of climate change, prolonging the use of fossil fuels and intensifying climate change to the detriment of Chicagoans.

In statement, the institute's lawyer Ryan Meyers called the action "meritless" and "an enormous waste of taxpayer resources," arguing climate policy was the domain of Congress, not cities.

A case management hearing is set for June 20, according to court records.

2024 Chicago Tribune. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Chicago sues oil and gas companies for their role in contributing to climate change

(2024, February 21) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-02-chicago-sues-oil-gas-companies.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.