

CLIMATE ACCOUNTABILITY RESEARCH PROJECT

PIPELINE TO

POWER



**CLIMATE CRIMINALS 2025:
PAYBACK FOR FOSSIL FUEL OLIGARCHS
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By

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INTRODUCTION

The 2025 Climate Criminals have attained an oligarchic victory with almost complete capture of the federal executive branch. The election of Trump and his payback appointments of oil, gas and coal connected administrators has formed a government tipped in favor of industry agenda. In its first nine months, the Trump Administration has cancelled renewable energy projects, rolled back environmental protections, and provided a preferential boost to the fossil fuel sector, including the moribund coal industry. The Administration has eliminated scientific and weather organizations tracking climate change. This is a euphoric dream for the fossil fuel industry and a few specific leaders and industry activists.

CLIMATE CRIMINALS DIRECTORY

The following climate criminals have played historical and present roles in perpetuating climate destruction. Certain criminals have been awarded specific titles based on the nature of their crimes. Climate criminals designated as **"Oligarchs"** are members of Trump's Cabinet or Mega-donors with explicit ties to the fossil fuel industry.

Climate criminals designated with a **"Lifetime Achievement"** award are actors who have earned a spot in our "Hall of Shame" for their role in driving climate destruction over the last couple decades. Learn how we identify and select our climate criminals [here](#).

To search for a specific climate criminal, type the name into the search box below. Or keep scrolling to view our full climate criminal directory. Can't find who you're looking for? Suggest a name for our directory [here](#).



*Click to read the full profiles on our website



THE MAR-A-LAGO PAYBACK CRIMINALS

Several of the 2025 Climate Criminals include fossil fuel industry leaders who raised millions for Trump's reelection campaign. At an April 2024 meeting on energy policy at Mar-A-Lago, Trump pressed fossil fuel industry players through a boldly transactional request for up to \$1 billion for his campaign. He pledged to scrap Biden era regulations and said, according to attendees, that giving \$1 billion would be a "deal" in terms of the taxes and regulations they would avoid thanks to him. The industry stepped up by raising millions and working with pro-industry think tanks to put forward policy programs, such as those developed by the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025.

We are identifying the key 2025 Climate Criminals who have deployed their wealth, power, and position to put this destructive agenda in place and "run out the clock" for timely climate action. For example, fracker Harold Hamm, worth \$18 billion, was one of the co-conveners of the fossil fuel industry's fundraising efforts. Hamm, along with Vicki Hollub, CEO of Occidental Petroleum, convened industry donors and later hosted a nomination "watch party" in Washington, DC. Among others at the Mar-A-Lago gathering, was then North Dakota governor Doug Burgum and others. The drivers of this agenda include these climate criminals:

1: TIM DUNN

CEO BILLIONAIRE OF CROWNQUEST

Worth an estimated \$2.2 billion, Dunn is a devout Christian nationalist, fierce partisan, and one of the top ten individual donors to Donald Trump, contributing \$5 million through his company to a Trump SuperPAC. Dunn is cofounder of the right-wing America First Policy Institute where he told a 2023 gathering: "It would be ideal if we could get rid of this 'CO2 as a pollutant' business... I hope we have an E.O. (executive order)...to curb all this silliness about CO2 emissions."

2: RICHARD KINDER

CO-FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN OF KINDER MORGAN

Kinder Morgan is the largest operator of natural gas pipelines across the United States, which “contribute to about 40% of the natural gas consumed in the U.S” through its ownership of or interest in roughly 83,000 miles of oil and gas pipelines. Kinder used his wealth, power and position to help elect Trump in 2024 and roll-back climate regulation, restrictions of use of public lands, and a federal moratorium on LNG exports.

3: JIM GRECH

PRESIDENT AND CEO OF PEABODY ENERGY

Grech is responsible for the alleged crimes of bribery, crimes against future generations and the Earth, crimes against workers, and fraud. Under his leadership, Peabody Energy continues as the United States' largest coal producer through dangerous mining practices that have been ignored in the past. Jim Grech used his power, wealth and position to elect Donald Trump president in 2024 and oversee an agenda to reassert coal and undermine renewable energy and climate regulation. Grech has overseen hundreds of thousands of dollars donated to political campaigns and lobbyists that resist common-sense climate change regulation and perpetuate the harmful burning of fossil fuels. Jim Grech continues to mislead the public about the true nature of coal production through misinformation campaigns that promote disproven technological solutions.

4: HAROLD HAMM

FOUNDER AND CHAIR OF CONTINENTAL RESOURCES

Hamm organizes billionaires in oil, gas, and coal sectors to capture our political system and buy off candidates in exchange for the rollback of anti-pollution measures. Hamm – “America’s richest oil man” – is guilty of a range of alleged climate crimes, from organizing quid pro quo campaign financing deals between Big Oil executives and Donald Trump to leading Continental Resources, one of the largest companies producing oil and fracking natural gas in the United States. He also leads the Domestic Energy Producers Alliance, a group with the goal to “produce more American oil and natural gas.” With a net worth of \$18.5 billion, Harold Hamm is the richest man in Oklahoma thanks to fossil fuels. He helped organize the fossil fuel industry to elect Trump, co-convening industry leaders to contribute to Trump in exchange for rolling-back climate protection regulations.

5: VICKI HOLLUB

PRESIDENT AND CEO OF OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM

Despite calling climate change “the greatest crisis our world has ever faced”, Hollub opposes a transition away from fossil fuels and encourages investments into carbon capture technology for the purpose of continuing crude oil production. Hollub worked to organize and fundraise within the fossil fuel industry to elect Donald Trump and implement their agenda to rollback climate protection regulations and boost the oil industry.

6: KELCY WARREN

CHAIRMAN OF ENERGY TRANSFER.

From spearheading the Dakota Access Pipeline to attempting to silence protestors with SLAPP suits, Kelcy Warren’s climate crimes are manifold. Warren is the billionaire chairman of Energy Transfer, the company behind the Dakota Access Pipeline, and Trump mega-donor. He is wanted as a climate criminal for his company’s ecologically destructive pipelines and dangerous hazardous spills, filing SLAPP lawsuits against environmental groups and anti-pipeline protestors in attempts to silence opposition, and hiring a military contractor to infiltrate groups of peaceful protestors. Warren has profited immensely from his crimes and has earned a spot in our Hall of Shame for his destructive actions.

The payback was immediate. On January 20th, Inauguration Day, Trump signed an executive order “Declaring a National Energy Emergency,” directing federal agencies to speed up energy projects such as coal mining and drilling for oil and gas.



CLIMATE CRIMINALS OCCUPYING GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

Trump has put the foxes in charge of the energy policy henhouse to implement the fossil fuel industry agenda. Leading 2025 Climate Criminals now hold the levers of power and decision-making. Trump immediately placed a cadre of fossil fuel industry boosters in key positions, including several of the 2025 climate Criminals. These include:

1: DOUG BURGUM

SECRETARY OF INTERIOR

The former governor of the third most oil producing state in the country blatantly disapproves of environmental regulations. As Trump's Secretary of the Interior, Burgum has opened up federal lands again to the fossil fuel industry and stood by the rollback of climate protection laws. Burgum is the former Governor of North Dakota and Donald Trump's appointee for secretary of the Department of the Interior. As governor, he promised to continue to expand the oil industry and set aside millions of dollars in the state budget to challenge federal regulations around oil and gas. Burgum helped arrange the April 2024 Mar-a-Lago dinner between Trump and oil executives, where the president-elect asked for \$1 billion in campaign donations from the oil industry. As head of the Department of the Interior, Burgum is pandering to the interests of fossil fuel oligarchs at the expense of the planet.

2: CHRIS WRIGHT

SECRETARY OF ENERGY

Wright is an oil services company executive overseeing the Department of Energy. As Secretary of the DOE, Wright appoint Alex Fitzsimmons to the Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response. Fitzsimmons, an industry ally, had worked on advocacy efforts to roll back the Clean Power Act.

3: LEE ZELDIN

HEAD OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA)

Trump stated that at the helm of the EPA, "[Zeldin] will ensure fair and swift deregulatory decisions", which he is proving through a slate of actions that eliminate safeguards against climate change, and investments in clean energy and environmental justice. Zeldin has received a lifetime score of just 14% from the League of Conservation Voters, voting against protecting the environment at least 164 times as a Congressional Representative for NY's first Congressional district. In 2017, Zeldin voted to slash the EPA's budget by \$1.9 billion, or 25 percent. He is bringing this blatant deregulatory behavior to the Trump Administration through rolling back dozens of environmental protections, cancelling billions of dollars worth of grants, and eliminating hundreds of scientists and researchers.



*From left to right: Doug Burgum, Chris Wright, and Lee Zeldin

THE ENABLERS

The fossil fuel oligarchs depend on lawyers, advertising agencies, and charitable entities funding sham research to advance their capture of energy policy. Here are three 2025 Climate Criminals who have played a significant role:

1: KIM DENNIS

CO-FOUNDER AND CHAIR OF DONORSTRUST AND THE PRESIDENT/CEO OF THE SEARLE FREEDOM TRUST

Kimberly “Kim” O. Dennis co-founded DonorsTrust and leads the Searle Freedom Trust, two hubs that channel conservative “dark money” to groups opposing climate policy. Under her watch, Searle disbursed \$24.4M in 2022—including \$1.0M to AEI, \$1.32M to SPN, \$750k to Heritage, \$600k to Cato, and \$500k to CEI. DonorsTrust, fueled by \$9M from a Koch-run fund, has routed roughly \$400M to aligned organizations since 1999; by 2009 its vehicles supplied about a quarter of the climate countermovement’s funding.

2: KIM KOOPERSMITH

CHAIR EMERITUS OF AKIN GUMP STRAUSS HAUER & FELD LLP

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP has been dubbed as the worst law firm offender due to its significant compensation from lobbying for fossil fuel interests. Akin Gump was compensated by fossil fuel clients 26 times more than the average law firm. The firm’s clientele includes a long list of fossil fuel companies as well as right-winged think tanks such as the Koch-founded Americans for Prosperity. Koopersmith has benefitted greatly from her company’s success and has received recognition for her success in the field.

3: MARK READ

FORMER CEO OF WPP

WPP is a large international advertising company with more oil & gas clients than any other public relations firm in the world. WPP has been accused of greenwashing its campaigns made for fossil fuel companies like Shell, BP, and Chevron. Prior to stepping down as CEO, Read earned a salary of £4.5M (or \$5.9M) in 2023, profiting heavily from his long list of fossil fuel clients.

CASE STUDY: PAYBACK TO BIG COAL

Coal burning in the U.S. has been in steady decline for decades because of its rising cost and its status as the most polluting form of all fossil fuels, accounting for roughly 40 percent of the planet's carbon dioxide emissions, according to the [Global Carbon Project](#). In 2000, half of U.S. energy came from coal. By 2023, coal had [shrunk to 16.2 percent](#), replaced by less expensive gas, solar, wind, and other renewables. Since 2000, 780 coal generating units have been shuttered and half the remaining 400 facilities are scheduled for retirement, [according](#) to Global Energy Monitor.

In eight short months, the prospects for the coal industry have entirely reversed. Zombie coal plants, scheduled for closure, have gotten new life with executive orders to keep them open. Through the intervention of climate criminals, such as Jim Grech, CEO of Peabody Energy, have these zombie coal facilities been resurrected. Grech, returning for a second year as a leading climate criminal, worked to change the trajectory of the coal industry.

As a leader of [Americas Power](#), a pro-coal lobbying group, Grech advanced the idea that coal plants should be kept open because of a national energy emergency, even though coal remains the worst polluting and most expensive energy source. Just like manufacturing a crime wave to justify federal military intervention into US cities, Trump energy officials have hyped up the risk of summer [power outages in the Midwest](#) to justify emergency pronouncements.

On April 8, Trump signed an Executive Order at the White House, "[Reinvigorating America's Beautiful Clean Coal Industry](#)," that prevented closure of coal plants under the Federal Power Act and lifted a moratorium on drilling and mining on federal lands.

Six days later, Jim Grech and Peabody announced the signing of seven-year contract with [Associated Electric Cooperative](#) to provide 7 to 8 million tons of coal per year to midwestern coal generating stations. The value and terms of the contract are not public, but its estimated value is, at minimum, over \$5 billion, not including the cost of transporting the coal from Wyoming to Midwest utilities.

CASE STUDY: PAYBACK TO BIG COAL (CONT'D)

On Friday evening May 23, officials at the Michigan-based utility, Consumers Energy, received an unusual order. Trump's Department of Energy, citing a "national energy emergency," ordered the Michigan-based utility, Consumers Electric, to keep open the J.H. Campbell coal plant on the shores of Lake Michigan, slated for June 1 closure.

DOE's Fitzsimmons issued the May 23 order to keep the J.H. Campbell power plant open, citing "national security considerations." A leaked DOE memo revealed that Fitzsimmons fully understood the practical and financial challenges of closing the plant but pressed ahead.

"What was surprising about this order is that nobody was asking for it," said Dan Scripps, chair of the Michigan Public Service Commission, in an interview with The New York Times. Neither the utility nor the state requested this and Michigan energy officials estimate the additional cost to consumers of keeping the 63-year-old plant open will be \$279 million annually.

On August 21, the Trump administration extended the order for an additional 90 days, the statutory maximum for such an emergency. These actions are an extraordinary and unprecedented federal intervention in state-level utility regulation -and a Trump era payback to the fossil fuel oligarchs who helped get him elected.

The JH Campbell coal plant scrambled to comply with the Trump administration's order. After allowing the plant's coal reserves to dwindle, in anticipation of the June 1 closure, Consumers Energy worked to keep retiring staff on board and locate the 15,000 tons of coal per day the plant needs to operate. A spokesperson from Consumer Energy told me they are sourcing it from Wyoming's Powder River Basin (PRB) on an ongoing basis to comply with the order but declined to disclose which company. Peabody Energy remains one of the largest mining operators in the PRB.

CASE STUDY: PAYBACK TO BIG COAL (CONT'D)

In Michigan, protesters took to the streets to protest keeping the Campbell plant open. At an August 15 demonstration at the office of U.S. Representative Bill Huizenga, environmental activist Indigo Umlor told the Michigan Advance, that Huizenga “has chosen to align with MAGA politicians and align with keeping this plant open for longer. This plant is costing about \$1 million a day to stay open, and in the last five weeks has cost taxpayers about \$30 million.”

Grech and his pals love Trump’s executive orders and deregulation moves, but must, in Grech’s words, “make it stick through legislation.”



Protestors in Holland's Memorial Park on Friday, Aug. 15, 2025. [ONN photo/Dirk Wierenga]

METHODOLOGY

Our data is acquired from [WealthX](#), [Forbes](#), and [Bloomberg's](#) billionaire wealth trackers. The net worth of the top fifteen wealthiest oil and gas billionaires in the United States were acquired using Forbes' data, and we are concurrently tracking and comparing figures using Bloomberg. Forbes' figures are updated every five minutes based on the continuously fluctuating stock market, and Bloomberg's dataset is updated at the close of every trading day. The data for this report is accurate as of January 14, 2025.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS AND CARP

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