

Big oil uncovered

# Trump promised to scrap climate laws if US oil bosses donated \$1bn - report

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## Trump promised to 20 executives at Mar-a-Lago dinner to increase oil drilling and reverse pollution rules among other pitches

[Donald Trump](#) dangled a brazen “deal” in front of some of the top US oil bosses last month, proposing that they give him \$1bn for his White House re-election campaign and vowing that once back in office he would instantly tear up [Joe Biden](#)’s environmental regulations and prevent any new ones, according to a bombshell new report.

According to the [Washington Post](#), the former US president made his jaw-dropping pitch, which the paper described as “remarkably blunt and transactional”, at a dinner at his Mar-a-Lago home and club.

In front of more than 20 executives, including from Chevron, Exxon and Occidental Petroleum, he promised to increase oil drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, remove hurdles to drilling in the Alaskan Arctic, and reverse new rules designed to cut car pollution. He would also overturn the Biden administration’s [decision in January](#) to pause new natural gas export permits which have been denounced as “climate bombs”.

“You’ll get it on the first day,” Trump said, according to the Post, citing an unnamed dinner attendee.

Trump’s exhortation to the oil executives that they were wealthy enough to pour \$1bn into his campaign war-chest, at the same time pledging a U-turn on Biden’s efforts to combat the climate crisis, was immediately denounced on Wednesday by environmental groups.

“\$1bn for Trump, a devastating climate future for the rest of us,” said Pete Maysmith of the League of Conservation Voters (LCV).

Christina Polizzi of Climate Power told the Guardian that Trump was “putting the future of the planet up for sale”.

“He is in the pocket of big oil – he gave them \$25bn in tax breaks in his first term – and now it’s clear he is willing to do whatever big oil wants in a potential second term.”

The former president’s exchange with fossil fuel giants also engaged the concern of groups monitoring the influence of money in politics. Jordan Libowitz of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics (Crew), a non-partisan government watchdog, said the conversation, as reported by the Post, “certainly looks a lot like quid pro quo”.

Libowitz said the encounter was “about as blatant as I’ve ever seen. Politicians often give a nudge and a wink, they don’t say raise a billion dollars for me and I’ll get rid of the regulations that you want.”

He added that Crew’s legal team were looking into whether this rises to the high legal standard of bribery.

Trump’s close relations to the oil industry, and his hostility to federal regulations designed to reduce emissions that exacerbate the climate crisis, are well-known and longstanding. With six months to go until the presidential election, however, he is stepping up his efforts to attract campaign donations from the sector.

Trump is also performing strongly in the polls. Having all but certainly secured the Republican nomination, Trump is often narrowly ahead of [Joe Biden](#) in surveys of the presidential race, including performing strongly in the key swing states that are vital to any candidate’s chances of victory. Trump’s solid performance comes despite a swath of legal woes, including currently being on trial in New York over an alleged hush-money payment to the adult film star Stormy Daniels.

For their part, executives in big oil companies have been preparing for a possible Trump second term by drafting executive orders designed to be ready to sign as soon as he returns to office. Politico [reported this week](#) that the executives have clubbed together to produce off-the-shelf policies on increasing natural gas exports, supercharging drilling and extending offshore oil leases.

The interplay between Trump and the oil giants as the election approaches underlines the vast gulf between the former president and the current occupant of the White House. According to an analysis by a group of environmental groups including the Sierra Club and LCV, the Biden administration has taken more than [300 actions](#) towards greater public health and clean energy, more than any other administration in US history.

Those measures included the first major climate legislation, [the Inflation Reduction Act](#), which has propelled record investment in clean energy including solar and wind and increased sales of electric vehicles. US energy emissions are slowly declining, by some 3% this year.

Even so, the [US is extracting](#) more oil and gas than ever, reaching almost 13m barrels of crude oil a day - more than double the production levels a decade ago.

**Ed Pilkington** in New York

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