

A Day of Action on Polluter Greed

Dakota Corrales

On June 14, in San Diego, Ventura, Santa Barbara, Goleta, Carpinteria, San Luis Obispo, Oakland, and Sacramento, residents participated in a day of action to highlight the ways fossil fuel corporations are exploiting Russia's war in Ukraine in order to make record profits at the pump and lock us into more in-state drilling.

Advocates are urging Gov. Newsom to honor the commitments he made at his [State of the State address](#) earlier this year when he said "We need to be fighting polluters, not bolstering them." The path forward is to end neighborhood drilling by finalizing a strong 3,200-foot buffer rule that separates both new and existing oil operations from communities and ending permitting for new projects as the state works to phase out fossil fuels.

San Luis Obispo community members took action at the Santa Maria Phillips 66 refinery and the Guadalupe Chevron station, calling on Gov. Newsom to stand up to

[#Polluter Greed](#), end neighborhood drilling, and stop permitting new fossil fuel projects. Local Sunrise activist Dakota Corrales was interviewed by [KSBY](#).





Kayak action on the Sacramento River photo, a few yards from the Governor's residence. Photo: Tesa Richardson

In Ventura, community members took their fight to Big Oil at the pump jacks. 8000 Ventura residents live within 2,500 ft of an oil well, 60% are Latinx. They're paying for polluter profits with their health.

Residents of Santa Barbara County organized actions at gas stations in Carpinteria, Goleta, and downtown to call out Big Oil's greed. Californians are paying for polluters' profits and they've had enough.

Activists in Oakland and the Bay Area rallied at a Chevron station to name and shame oil companies

exploiting the war in Ukraine to jack up prices at the pump while making record profits this year.

In Sacramento, activists rallied and staged a die-in at the HQ of Big Oil's favorite lobbyists, the Western States Petroleum Association, to condemn the oil industry's stranglehold on our democracy, then marched to the Capitol. In the evening, kayaktivists took to the river near Gov. Newsom's property and called on Newsom to say no to Big Oil Greed.

And in San Diego, youth leaders called out the oil companies that are charging record prices for gas and are prepared to condemn our young people's future to climate collapse.

A press conference in Bakersfield that day highlighted the recent discovery that 28 wells there have been found to be leaking dangerous levels of methane. The day of action drew attention to the ways people pay for polluter greed not only at the pump but also with their health, and demanded stronger 3200-foot setbacks that cover both new *and existing* oil wells.

The next day, [the Biden administration called on oil companies to start drilling more oil in the US](#). This is exactly the opposite of what we know needs to happen. In California, Newsom can and must take a different approach and end our dependence on the polluting profiteers by rapidly transitioning the state away from fossil fuels.

These Top 5 Oil Companies Just Raked In \$35 Billion

While families on tight budgets struggle to pay the sky-high price of gas, these five oil companies more than tripled their profits in the first quarter of 2022.

By [Sally Hardin](#), Director, Energy and Environment Campaigns, Center for American Progress and [Jenny Rowland-Shea](#), Deputy Director, Public Lands, Center for American Progress

Since Russia's unjustified invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which disrupted the global supply of fossil fuels and caused oil and gas shortages worldwide, oil and gas giants have quietly enjoyed unprecedented record profits. While people across the United States have seen gas prices as high as [\\$6 per gallon](#)—stretching budgets thin and driving worsening inflation—the oil majors have been absolutely raking in money, lining CEOs' and shareholders' pockets with profits.



It is hard to overstate how profitable the war in Ukraine and the resulting financial pain have been for oil executives. Companies already benefited from inflated gas prices in 2021 as the economy bounced back from the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns—in fact, the top 25 companies made more than [\\$205 billion](#) in profits in 2021—but the first-quarter profits for 2022 are even more astounding.

The top five oil companies alone—Shell, ExxonMobil, BP, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips—brought in more than 300 percent more in profits than in the first quarter of 2021. That is a total of more than \$35 billion in profits in just three months. In fact, these five companies' first-quarter profits alone are equivalent to almost 28 percent of what Americans spent to fill up their gas tanks in the same time period.

Gas prices are too high for families on tight budgets, but Congress can take action now—including directing the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to investigate price gouging, adopting a “use-it-or-lose-it” policy for drilling on public lands, and implementing a windfall profits tax—to help tackle high prices while reducing the United States' reliance on volatile fossil energy markets and addressing ever-worsening climate change.

Oil executives should not be able to profit off everyone else's financial pain as their companies earn record profits. Congress must provide some relief to consumers—and hold oil companies accountable.

Oil and gas corporations—and the trade groups they fund to lobby on their behalf—would have people [believe](#) that they need access to more places to drill, better market signals, and fewer regulations in order to make the investments needed to help lower prices. But the truth is that they are flush with the cash that could be used to make those very investments—a fact they are not even trying to hide. For example, the CEO of Shell is on record [admitting](#) to profiteering off Russia's war in Ukraine:

“The performance we are seeing this quarter, of course, has been helped by the macro, and the macro has been impacted by the war in Ukraine.” - Shell CEO Ben van Beurden

Instead of using this cash to [fulfill their climate pledges](#), companies are [giving most of it back](#) to their already extremely wealthy shareholders in the form of stock buybacks or giving it back to themselves in the form of executive bonuses. Last year, 28 of the top oil and gas CEOs raked in [\\$394 million](#) in compensation—a nearly \$45 million increase since 2020.

Fossil fuel prices are volatile by design, vulnerable to international conflicts, and allow large corporations to profiteer off war on the backs of American families. The United States [cannot drill](#) its way to energy independence; it must transition to homegrown renewable energy.

But Congress can act now to get the FTC to investigate any possible price gouging, require that companies use or give up public lands for more productive uses, and pass a windfall profits tax that ensures the American people get a share of Big Oil's profits. As the summer driving season approaches, Big Oil cannot be allowed to continue to line its pockets while families suffer. It is past time for Congress to act.

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Tired of Big Oil ripping off California? Counter the very big lie that more drilling will lower gas prices and spread the word in SLO County. Get your community-informing stickers [here](#).