

Questions for the Record from
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U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Natural Resources

Hearing on

“The Role of Public Relations Firms in Preventing Action on Climate Change”

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Question from Representative Porter

1. In addition to the events you described in your hearing testimony, what other negative consequences have you or your organization suffered in the wake of your attempts to pass the Colorado ballot measures?

Several of the core team members had their phones hacked or their computers mysteriously blacked out and rendered useless. Examples of hacking were having text messages and phone calls not be transmitted at all and for no apparent reason. In one instance the individuals were sitting next to each other and sending test messages that appeared to go through on the sender's phone but were never received on the other phone. In another instance, the inbox of my email account was deleted with no way to trace the messages after getting onto a public wifi network while on vacation in Canada.

We also had at least two attempts from the opposition to leverage fines against us via complaints filed with the state regarding our funding and wages reports for signature gathering. These were all dismissed but were extremely stressful as the consequences would have cost thousands of dollars to either the organization or us personally.

2. From your time working on Proposition 112 and advocating on behalf of local residents, please elaborate on how fracking and other oil and gas extraction affected the health of nearby communities.

The impacts are numerous and I heard firsthand accounts that ranged from short-term acute effects like nose bleeds, asthma attacks, coughing episodes, headaches, irritated eyes and throat to significantly more long-term and critical health impacts like cancer, low birth weight in newborns, cardiovascular disease,

and deadly explosions like in the instance of the Firestone home explosion that killed two men and gravely injured two others in their home. When I was working on the issue several studies from the Colorado School of Public Health and the state of Colorado concluded there is an elevated risk of adverse health impacts from living near oil and gas extraction facilities from exposure to toxic emissions and explosions were a monthly occurrence in the state.

Many residents also reported their homes shaking from horizontal drilling occurring under their homes or from seismic testing the operators performed in neighborhoods. The traffic, noise, and lights were frequent points of stress and disruption for nearby communities. These complaints are well documented in the Colorado Oil and Gas Commission's logs.

It is also important to note the facilities that were causing these impacts are not the single pump jacks of old western films. These are multi-well pads, in many cases 40 wells or more to a site, and are a full industrial operation that isn't subject to any local zoning codes which also impacted property values.

Here is a sample of studies documenting health impacts in Colorado and the greater United States:

A Princeton study of 10 million babies found that infants born within one kilometer (3,280 ft) of a fracking well were 25% more likely to have low birth weights (less than 5.5 pounds) than infants born more than three kilometers away.

<https://www.princeton.edu/news/2017/12/13/hydraulic-fracturing-negatively-impacts-infant-health>

Colorado School of Public Health study:

Concluded residents living $\leq \frac{1}{2}$ mile from wells are at greater risk for health effects from NGD than are residents living $> \frac{1}{2}$ mile from wells.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22444058>

Department of Environmental and Occupational Health at the Colorado School of Public Health study:

Found negative birth impacts within 10 miles of oil and gas development.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=10.1289%2Fehp.1306722>

Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project Study:

The panel reached consensus that setbacks of $< \frac{1}{4}$ mile should not be recommended and additional setbacks for vulnerable populations should be recommended.

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0202462>

Environmental Health Perspectives study:

Found that the average evacuation zone was 0.8 mi (4224 ft.). Concluded there is no defined setback distance that assures safety based on evaluation of numerous health impacts.

<https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/10.1289/ehp.1510547>

Hopkins Asthma Study:

People with asthma who live near bigger or larger numbers of active unconventional natural gas wells operated by the fracking industry in Pennsylvania are 1.5 to 4 times likelier to have asthma attacks than those who live farther away.

<https://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2016/study-fracking-industry-wells-associated-with-increased-risk-of-asthma-attacks.html>

Hopkins Birth Study:

The researchers found that living in the most active quartile of drilling and production activity was associated with a 40 percent increase in the likelihood of a woman giving birth before 37 weeks of gestation (considered pre-term) and a 30 percent increase in the chance that an obstetrician had labeled their pregnancy “high-risk.”

<https://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2015/study-fracking-industry-wells-associated-with-premature-birth.html>

Global Public Health Review Paper:

"We have enough evidence at this point that these health impacts should be of serious concern to policymakers interested in protecting public health," Gorski said.

<http://oxfordre.com/publichealth/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190632366.001.0001/acrefore-9780190632366-e-44>

May 26, 2017: Gas Well Blowout in Logan County where a safety valve failed. This resulted in a 2-mile evacuation radius.

<https://www.denverpost.com/2017/05/26/leaking-gas-well-sterling-evacuations/>

September 8th, 2017: Valve leak at SRC Energy site evacuates high school football game to ½ mile.

<https://www.greeleytribune.com/news/local/west-greeley-gas-leak-forces-evacuation-of-football-stadium-during-game/>

December 22, 2017: Extraction Oil & Gas wellsite explodes resulting in a 1 mile evacuation radius.

<https://www.hcn.org/issues/50.18/energy-industry-how-site-workers-and-firefighters-responding-to-a-2017-natural-gas-explosion-in-windsor-colorado-narrowly-avoided-disaster>

November 7, 2018: Noble Energy well site fire evacuated to one mile.

<https://denver.cbslocal.com/2018/11/07/oil-gas-fire-weld-county/>

November 13, 2018: Noble Energy well site fire resulted in ½ mile evacuation radius.

<https://www.greeleytribune.com/news/noble-energy-site-near-windsor-catches-fire/>

3. In your testimony, you shared that over the course of your campaign you documented numerous individuals engaging in nefarious tactics, including following, harassing, and sabotaging your efforts. You provided the Committee with screenshots from various text messages you received from an individual after your campaign collected enough signatures to get on the ballot. Can you describe how you first came to know this person and what your interactions with the person were like? How did your interactions with this individual, and other similar interactions, affect you? Did it affect how you approached organizing and campaigning?

The first time I interacted with the individual that sent the text messages in the screenshots was at a signature gathering training that I lead in the Boulder campaign office. The individual attended the training and presented himself as a supporter of the cause, even answering “icebreaker” questions like “why are you interested in volunteering for this campaign?” At the time, his demeanor and responses instigated red flags in my mind and I noted that I felt he was an infiltrator and not fully disclosing his intentions in being there.

The next interaction I had with this individual was outside the Colorado Secretary of State’s office in Denver when we submitted our collected signatures to be placed on the ballot. There were 4-5 individuals standing outside the building and in the lobby seemingly waiting for our arrival. We had a similar “greeting committee” when we submitted the collected signatures in 2016. I recognized one of the individuals waiting for us as the same suspicious person that attended the signature gathering training. I proceeded to tell him I was glad he could make it to the big event and that he should know I was aware that he was misrepresenting himself from our first interaction a few months before.

After the Colorado Secretary of State certified our initiative as a proposition on the 2018 ballot, I received the text messages in the screenshots congratulating me on our success. A few days later, the same individual text me again asking if I would like to go out for coffee or ice cream. I did not respond.

4. What is a SLAPP suit? By whom and for what reasons was one brought against your organization? What was the outcome of that lawsuit?

A SLAPP suit stands for strategic litigation against public participation. Two other individuals from our organization and myself were sued by the principal of the first signature-gathering firm that we contracted

with for stating publicly that they had taken our signatures without our permission and that they attempted to extort us for their return. The lawsuit last over a year and a half and resulted in the plaintiffs withdrawing the suit. We had recorded all conversations with the principal of the firm that showed him admitting to taking the signatures and the attempted extortion. We were also all protected by good samaritan laws because we were volunteers. Finally, the only damages the firm could provide was the loss of a contract with PACWest, a communications firm that is well known for working with the oil and gas industry and is a subject of investigation in this hearing.

5. Is there anything else you would like to add for the hearing record?

No.