



What is the problem?

Scientists say we must limit global warming to 2°C if we want to avoid *catastrophic* climate change. To meet this goal, we can burn only 565 gigatons more carbon dioxide. But the fossil fuel industry has 2,765 gigatons of carbon in their reserves – nearly 5 times the safe amount – and every day they’re searching for more. Simply put, their “business plan” is incompatible with a livable planet.

What is fossil fuel divestment?

Divestment is the process of pulling investments from fossil fuel companies (i.e., oil & gas and coal producers) in order to cease capitalizing the destruction of the planet. It’s also a tactic for fighting the forces standing in the way of climate change mitigation efforts.

Why are we advocating divestment?

- *Political reason:* The fossil fuel industry has overwhelming and disproportionate influence in Congress, preventing our elected officials from passing laws that would address climate change by placing a price on carbon pollution. As more and more local governments, universities, and religious institutions choose to divest, the industry will be increasingly stigmatized, making our members of Congress more reluctant to side with them to block the pro-climate legislation that we need passed. Divestment was the strategy that Nelson Mandela said was pivotal in ending apartheid in South Africa.
- *Moral reason:* The United Nations has called climate change “an existential threat to human existence,” and yet the fossil fuel industry’s business plan calls for as much exploration for and development of fossil fuels as possible. This is just immoral. At a certain point, we have to say that we will not be a part of this.
- *Economic reason:* Eventually, as the climate worsens, the burning of carbon will have to be curtailed. Most known fossil fuel reserves will need to remain in the ground, becoming “stranded assets.” But stocks are valued based upon full exploitation. This makes investments in this industry look much less attractive.

What is 350MoCo doing towards the goal of divestment?

We now have a bill (Bill 44-16) before the County Council! It directs the fund managers of the Montgomery County Employees’ Retirement System (ERS) and Consolidated Retiree Health Benefits Trust (CRHBT) to divest of fossil fuel holdings in the 200 largest publicly traded fossil fuel companies whenever the fund managers determine that such divestment will not have a significant negative impact. The bill clearly gives top priority to honoring fiduciary duty.

Will Montgomery County lose money if it divests?

No. Not only does the bill require fiduciary duty to take first priority, but study after study has shown that divestment does not sacrifice rate of return. It also is the more prudent approach, since the industry is slated to have stranded assets.

For more details, and to sign our petition, go to our website: <http://www.350moco.org/>