

Climate Campaigners Welcome SCOTUS Refusal to Hear Big Oil's Appeal of California Lawsuits



Forward on Climate Rally ([Photo: Ben Schumin | Flickr](#))

By [Brett Wilkins](#) | [Common Dreams](#)

Climate campaigners on Monday welcomed the U.S. Supreme Court's refusal to hear an appeal by oil and gas companies including BP, Chevron, and ExxonMobil seeking to shift a lawsuit from state to federal court, a move that means litigation filed by states and cities against fossil fuel

corporations will continue to play out in lower courts.

“Appeals courts have overwhelmingly agreed that climate liability lawsuits filed in state courts belong in state courts.” –Richard Wiles, Center for Climate Integrity

The decision represents “a blow to Big Oil’s efforts to escape accountability,” [tweeted](#) the Center for Climate Integrity.

The justices [denied](#) a writ of certiorari in *Chevron v. Oakland*, the oil giant’s response to landmark lawsuits by numerous [California counties and cities](#) alleging fossil fuel companies including Chevron, Exxon, BP, ConocoPhillips, and Shell are responsible for subjecting their residents to adverse effects of climate change, including sea-level rise, flooding, wildfires, heatwaves, and extreme weather events.

“Big Oil and Gas companies keep trying to evade responsibility for their role in the climate crisis so they can stick taxpayers with the bill for the massive damages their products cause,” Richard Wiles, executive director of the Center for Climate Integrity, said in a [statement](#) welcoming the decision. “Appeals courts have overwhelmingly agreed that climate liability lawsuits filed in state courts belong in state courts.”

Furthermore, the plaintiffs accused fossil fuel corporations of waging a decades-long campaign of denial and deception about the harms some of them [knew](#) for decades that their products caused.

The oil companies wanted the case moved from state to federal court where, [according to Bloomberg Law](#), they tend to secure more favorable outcomes.

[#SCOTUS](#) won’t hear environmental case No 20-1089 Chevron v. Oakland alleging global climate change is “public nuisance.” The issue for the Justices was a procedural one re: removal of case from state to federal court and plaintiffs’ ability

to appeal that removal.

– Kimberly Robinson (@KimberlyRobinson) [June 14, 2021](#)

The Bay Area cities of Oakland and San Francisco in 2017 were the [first U.S. municipalities to sue](#) Big Oil seeking to hold fossil fuel polluters accountable for driving the climate emergency. Since then, at least 26 state and local governments have filed similar lawsuits against fossil fuel corporations, according to the Center for Climate Integrity, which filed amicus briefs in some of the cases.

In May 2020, a panel of the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in two separate rulings [overturned](#) a federal district court's ruling dismissing the Oakland and San Francisco lawsuits, sending the cases back to lower courts for further consideration. The panel also ruled that day that climate damage lawsuits filed by half a dozen other California counties and cities should continue in state courts.

“The Supreme Court did the right thing by letting the Ninth Circuit's ruling stand,” Wiles said. “Oakland, San Francisco, and the more than 20 other states and communities seeking to hold Big Oil accountable deserve their day in court.”

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