Preliminary Rough Draft - 11/13/20
(Based on The No Fossil Fuel Money Pledge - http://nofossilfuelmoney.org/pledge-signers/)

The No (Big?) Plastics Money Pledge

The Pledge:

> **"*I pledge not to take contributions over $200 from chemical and plastics industry executives, lobbyists, and PACs, and instead to prioritize the welfare of our families, ecosystems and of the planet, and democracy over plastics industry profits.*"**

Taking the pledge means that you and your campaign will adopt a policy to not knowingly accept any contributions over $200 from the PACs, lobbyists, or SEC-named executives of plastic or petrochemicals "Big Plastics", comprised of companies whose primary business is the production and proliferation of plastics.

The term "Big Plastic" is a catchall for the vast array of companies manufacturers, recyclers, raw materials providers, extruders, brand owners, and others in the plastics and petrochemicals business.

Plastics money is corrupting our political system, and impeding bold action on mitigating deleterious effects of their extraction, refining, manufacturing, transportation, product use and disposal, including climate change, plastic pollution, ecosystems and human and wildlife health risks, including vulnerable communities. Plastics companies spent more than $____ million in campaign contributions and lobbying California legislators in the 20__ cycle. In exchange, these companies continue to receive billions in subsidies and friendly laws that benefit themselves, instead of people, the environment, and the planet.

We need leaders who reject the influence of Plastics money and influence, and who will plan for a just, sustainable circular economy and livable planet for all of its inhabitants, not just the few. Leadership means saying NO to the Plastic industry and its money, and taking the No Plastics Money pledge is a core part of that commitment.

The No Plastics Money Pledge

A comparable and complimentary "No Fossil Fuel Money Pledge" was established in 2017. Since then, more than 2,800 politicians from 49 states have committed to reject campaign contributions from the fossil fuel industry. Likewise, politicians of all levels are welcome and encouraged to sign the "No Big Plastics Money pledge", to reject campaign contributions from the plastics industry, provided that they agree to the requirements and complete the steps for signing outlined below. If you have any questions, please reach out to pledge@nobigplasticmoney.org.

Need for the No Plastics Money Pledge

The No Big Plastics Money Pledge will become an important signifier to voters, to potential donors, and to the media and the public that a politician is willing to stand with people, not generous lobbyists. It is a public acknowledgment that the unmitigated proliferation of plastics has created a myriad of problems, including but not limited to global warming and climate change, the scourge of plastic litter and debris on land, beaches and oceans, the damage to marine ecosystems, known and unknown human health risks due to ingestion of micro-plastics and toxic air pollution. Click on this link Facts and Narratives, for an accounting of these and other attendant problems.

The range of solutions do not lie with Big Plastic corporations. In fact, these corporations created the problems, and crafted campaigns to deceive the public about the recyclability of plastic, and continue to block progress toward meaningful solutions. Climate impacts are mounting, ever persistent discarded plastic is accumulating, and the status quo of insufficient or non-existent action cannot continue. Refusing Big Plastic industry contributions symbolically frees a politician to take bolder stances for real plastics reform legislation, unbound from ties to the unrepentant Big Plastics industry.

As another point of reference, the “No Fossil Fuel Money Pledge” has featured prominently in dozens of elections in which a challenger who signed the pledge beat out an incumbent who had not, whether in the primary election or the general. In many cases, the challenger’s pledge to reject fossil fuel industry money was a subject of significant media and social media attention.

Make Your Pledge

Take your stand with the pledge, and your commitment to vote to represent your district constituents, not your otherwise Big Plastics lobby constituents.

Earth is not a Single-Use planet. Just say NO to Big Plastics money.

Website “Facts and Narratives”:

Climate Implications of Plastic

Plastic production is expanding worldwide, fueled in part by the fracking boom in the US. About two-thirds of all new gas production globally over the last decade has been from shale gas operations in the United States and Canada, using fracking. The signature lighter form of methane released during fracking is a substantial component of the overall atmospheric methane rise since 2008. This matters because methane heats up the climate over 80 times more than an equivalent amount of carbon dioxide in the first 20 years after it is released into the atmosphere. Then after, most methane becomes carbon dioxide, which can last for hundreds of years.

A Center for International Environmental Law (CEIL) report says plastic contributes to greenhouse gas emissions at every stage of its lifecycle, from its production to its refining and

the way it is managed as a waste product, all of which exacerbates climate change. The CEIL report warns that the greenhouse gas emissions from the plastic lifecycle jeopardize our ability to keep the global temperature rise below 1.5˚C. This is because more than 99 percent of plastics are made from fossil fuels, both natural gas and crude oil.

In 2019, the lifecycle of global plastic production, from extraction, refining, and waste management, the production and incineration of plastics was equivalent to the impact on the climate of 189 500 Mega-Watt (MW) coal-fired power stations, according to the CEIL report. If plastic production stays on its current trajectory, by 2030, greenhouse gas emissions from plastic could reach 1.34 billion tons per year, equivalent to the emissions produced by 300 new 500 MW coal-fired power plants. By 2050, the report predicts, the global plastic footprint will be equivalent to 615 coal plants running at full capacity.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded in a landmark report that we only have until 2030 to drastically reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and prevent the planet from reaching the crucial threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Experts have repeatedly warned that exceeding the threshold will contribute to more heatwaves and hot summers, greater sea level rise, worse droughts and rainfall extremes, wildfires, floods and food shortages for millions of people. The climate crisis is already harming Americans today. Overcoming the climate emergency is the great moral imperative of our time.

Plastics Proliferation

The annual demand for plastic has almost doubled since 2000. And the growing global population, improving economic conditions and technological progress will create even more demand for plastics in the future, according to a report by the International Energy Agency (IEA). Currently, the U.S. and other developed countries use up to 20 times as much plastic per person as India, Indonesia and other developing countries.

Single Use Plastic

The U.S. produces more plastic packaging waste per capita than any other country. This throwaway plastic packaging makes up 40 percent of all plastic, with most ending up in landfills; the rest is incinerated or recycled. A Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) report, *Plastic & Climate*, found that as of the end of 2015, 8,300 million metric tons of virgin plastic had been produced globally, two-thirds of which remains in the environment.

“Packaging is one of the most problematic types of plastic waste, as it is typically designed for single use, ubiquitous in trash, and extremely difficult to recycle. A constant increase in the use of flexible and multilayered packaging has been adding challenges to collection, separation, and recycling,” the researchers said.

Forty per cent of plastic packaging waste is disposed of at sanitary landfills, 14% goes to incineration facilities and 14% is collected for recycling. Incineration creates the most CO2 (carbon dioxide) emissions among the plastic waste management methods.

Environmental Pollution

Plastic is one of the most ubiquitous materials in the economy and among the most pervasive and persistent pollutants on Earth.

It's worth noting that in both 2017 and 2018, Nestlé ranked in the top three among brands whose plastic trash was most often collected in global cleanup efforts conducted by the environmental group Break Free From Plastic.

Once regarded mostly as an eyesore or a nuisance, plastic waste is now widely understood to be a cause of species extinction and ecological devastation.

Marine Ecosystem

Every year, almost 10 million metric tons of plastic wind up in the ocean, where it is consumed by marine animals, and plastic waste is found on beaches in even the most remote places on Earth. Plastic also pollutes land, especially on farms where sewage sludge is used for fertilizer.

And, as we know from the plastic-filled whales that regularly wash up dead, the oceans are awash in plastic waste and now contain some 150 million tons of the stuff, a mass expected eventually to surpass the weight of all the fish in the seas.

Human Health Risks and Implications

We humans also have plastic lodged in our bodies. The substance often sold to us as protection from contamination is in both food and water. Bottled water, sales of which are increasing in part because people are seeking alternatives to contaminated local water supplies, now contains plastic as well. A 2018 study found that 93 percent of bottled water samples contained microplastics. While all the big brands tested positive for microplastics, the worst was Nestlé.

Recycled plastics are increasingly recognized as posing threats to our health. Plastics contain additives that determine its properties, including stability, color, and flexibility. Most of the thousands of these chemicals aren't regulated, but it's clear that some of those additives, which end up in recycled plastics, are dangerous. One study found that half of recycled plastics in India contained a flame retardant associated with neurological, reproductive, and developmental harms.

Black plastic, used in everything from children's toys to kitchen utensils, food packaging, cellphone cases, and thermoses, appears to be particularly dangerous. The plastic is often sourced from recycled electronics that contain phthalates, flame retardants, and heavy metals, such as cadmium, lead, and mercury. Even at very low levels, these chemicals can cause serious reproductive and developmental problems.

But most of the additives aren't tracked or well studied. "The industry has no idea what they're putting in the plastic and who's putting it in," said Andrew Turner, a British chemist who recently found toxic chemicals in 40 percent of the black plastic toys, thermoses, cocktail stirrers, and utensils he tested. In some plastic, he found the chemicals present at 30 times safety standards set by governments.

Even chemicals that are regulated often have limits set for electronics but not for recycled products. "You've got something that wouldn't be compliant with the regulations as an electric item because its levels are too high, but because it's turned into a fork, there's nothing to stop it

from being used," Turner said. Antimony, which Turner found in food containers, toys, and office supplies, "is restricted in drinking water, but not in electrical waste." Turner and Zhanyun Wang, another scientist I spoke with who studies chemical additives to plastics, told me that they no longer use black plastic utensils. "Given the option, I'd prefer something white or clear," said Turner, adding that he tries to avoid utensils made of any kind of plastic.

Air Pollution

With the institution of China's new policy in January 2018, the extent of the plastic waste crisis became dramatically more visible. Around the world, bales of used plastic that just a year earlier would have been destined for China began piling up. In the U.S., some cities have stopped their plastics recycling programs altogether.

Without good alternatives, the U.S. is now burning six times the amount of plastic it's recycling, even though the incineration process releases cancer-causing pollutants into the air and creates toxic ash, which also needs to be disposed of somewhere. And poor people are stuck with the worst consequences of the plastics crisis. Eight out of 10 incinerators in the U.S. are in communities that are either poorer or have fewer white people than the rest of the country, and residents living near them are exposed to the toxic air pollution their combustion produces.

Refining and Manufacture

"Plastics is among the most energy-intensive materials to produce," according to the head of CIEL. Ethane cracking is energy intensive because of the high heat needed, and produces significant emissions, as do the chemical refining processes that make other plastics.

Discarded Plastic

After it's used, plastic is incinerated, recycled or ends up in a landfill.

Carbon from the fossil fuel feedstock is locked into plastic products and emitted when plastic is incinerated or decomposes. In 2015, 25 percent of global plastic waste was incinerated; in the U.S., emissions from plastic incineration were equivalent to 5.9 million metric tons of CO2, equivalent to the emissions from heating 681,000 homes for a year.

Plastics in the environment, such as those that persist in landfills and litter coastlines all over the world, have been found by University of Hawaii researchers to release the greenhouse gases methane and ethylene when sunlight hits them; moreover, emissions from plastic on the ocean surface increase as the plastic breaks down.

Recycling

Right now, plastic recycling in the U.S. is not working well.

In 2015, the U.S. recycled about 9 percent of its plastic waste, and since then the number has dropped even lower. The vast majority of the 8.3 billion metric tons of plastic ever produced, 79 percent, has ended up in landfills or scattered all around the world.

The growing output of new cheap plastic further undermines the industry's own argument that recycling can resolve the waste crisis. It's already impossible for most recycled plastic to compete with "virgin" plastic in the marketplace. With the exception of bottles made of PET (No.

1) and HDPE (No. 2), the rest of the waste is essentially worthless. Around 30 percent of both types of plastic bottles were sold for recycling in 2017, though some of those may have wound up being landfilled or incinerated.

For decades, the U.S. sent its recycled plastic to China, but in 2017, China banned certain types of solid waste, mainly plastics. Without a market for recycled plastic, recycling is no longer economically viable for many municipalities. The Plastic Pollution Coalition estimates that in 2018, only two percent of municipal plastic waste was recycled in the U.S. and six times more plastic was burned than recycled.

China's decision in 2017 to stop receiving the vast majority of plastic waste from other countries blew the flimsy lid off our dysfunctional recycling system. That year, when the Chinese government announced the National Sword policy, as it's called, the U.S. sent 931 million kilograms of plastic waste to China and Hong Kong. The U.S. has been offloading vast bundles of scrap this way since at least 1994, when the Environmental Protection Agency began tracking plastics exports. The practice has served to both mask the mounting crisis and absolve U.S. consumers of guilt. But in fact, much of the "recycled" plastic scrap that the U.S. sent to China appears to have been burned or buried instead of being refashioned into new products.

Since the EPA began tracking plastics recycling in 1994, when the U.S. recycled less than 5 percent, the rate went up only about 5 percent, peaking at 9.5 percent in 2014. Although there is no data before 1994, the rate was almost certainly even lower then. Some of that failure can be blamed on careless consumers, but much of the waste that is dutifully put into recycling bins and bags also gets landfilled and burned because there's no market for it.

Only about 8.4 percent of plastic is recycled. But, according to scientists from UC Santa Barbara, even recycling plastic produces greenhouse gas emissions, as fossil fuels are combusted to run the machines that shred plastic waste and heat it up to make other products.

Today in 2020, the plastics industry, estimated to be worth more than $4 trillion, generates more than 300 million tons of plastic a year according to the most recent records, nearly half of which is for single-use items, meaning that it will almost instantly become trash.

Recycled plastic used to be cheaper than new plastic, but because of the boom in petrochemical production in the U.S., and because of the demand for recycled plastic from sustainable companies, virgin plastic is becoming cheaper than recycled.

Unknowns

Because no one has learned how to remove additives from plastic, products made from recycled waste, such as the railroad ties, fence posts, and decks made from plastic, can release toxic chemicals as they degrade. "Some of the types of plastics that they're proposing to recycle contain chemicals connected to a 50-year decline in sperm count, to type 2 diabetes, and to breast and prostate cancer.

There is still much that scientists don't know about microplastics, their impacts on the environment or what to do about them, but one thing we do know: "Anything that we produce that we put into the atmosphere or on our planet, microplastics and CO2, are going to be around. They're not going anywhere," said Tedesco, "You can stop producing plastics now and

you can stop emitting CO2 now, but the effect of what's left in the atmosphere or what's around in terms of microplastics will still be huge…. And there's really no clear technological path to the removal of microplastics at any scale."

Legislation

In the U.S., the Trump administration has worked against international efforts to crack down on plastic waste, so cities and towns are leading the way. While only eight states have enacted plastic restrictions, more than 330 local plastic bag ordinances have passed in 24 states. Some federal lawmakers have also recognized that federal action is necessary to beat back the mounting tide of plastic. "Plastics recycling is not a realistic solution to the plastic pollution crisis. Most consumer plastics are economically impractical to recycle based on market conditions alone," Rep. Alan Lowenthal and Sen. Tom Udall wrote in a letter to President Donald Trump in June, noting that the "spread of single-use plastic products has led to widespread pollution of plastic in the U.S. and has caused a growing financial burden on state agencies, local governments and taxpayers for remediation."

Around the world, taxes, bans, and fees on plastic products have been catching on. In March 2020, the European Union voted to ban single-use plastics by 2021. In June, Canada followed suit, with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau vowing to not just ban single-use plastics such as bags, straws, and cutlery, but also to hold plastics manufacturers responsible for their waste. One hundred and forty-one countries, including China, Bangladesh, India, and 34 African countries, have implemented taxes or partial bans on plastics.

As of 2018, 127 countries had some type of legislation regulating plastic bags, according to a United Nations Environment Programme report. These bills might involve limiting the bags' manufacture or use, taxing them or regulating their disposal. Twenty-seven countries have banned certain plastic products, such as packaging, plates, cups and straws. Sixty-three countries have required extended producer responsibility for single-use plastics, where producers of the plastic are responsible, financially or physically, to deal with their disposal.

In the U.S., the only federal ban on plastics is the Microbead-free Waters Act of 2015, forbidding the use of microbeads in cosmetics. Eight states have enacted other plastic restrictions, and 24 states have passed approximately 330 local plastic bag laws.

Big Plastic's Fight Back

The companies that make billions from plastics have no intention of slowing down. Instead, the industry is gearing up for the fight of its life.

At stake for them is not just the current plastics market now worth hundreds of billions of dollars annually, but its likely expansion. Falling oil and gas prices mean that the cost of making new plastic, already very low, will be even cheaper. The price drop has led to more than 700 plastics industry projects now in the works, including expansions of old plants and the construction of new ones by Chevron, Shell, Dow, Exxon, Formosa Plastics, Nova Chemicals, and Bayport Polymers, among other companies, according to a presentation from the regulatory affairs director of the BASF Corporation at a plastics industry conference.

The recent fossil fuel boom makes it even cheaper to make new plastic and thus, even more difficult to sell the recycled product. This, in turn, makes the plastics companies' push for recycling that much more implausible, and their battle to kill efforts to limit plastics production even more desperate.

Around 2015, rather than just opposing individual bans, the American Progressive Bag Alliance began lobbying for state preemption laws. The approach, which another Koch brothers-affliated group, the American Legislative Exchange Council, has used to prevents cities and towns from passing local plastic bans. In the past eight years, the American Chemistry Council has helped pass preemption bills based on ALEC's model in 13 states. About 42 percent of Americans now live in states where they can't pass local bans on plastics.

Solutions

With the petrochemical and plastic industries planning a massive expansion in production, the problems are on track to get much worse. The CIEL report studied possible solutions to the plastic pollution problem, and determined that five measures would reduce greenhouse gas emissions the most, and deliver environmental and social benefits:

1. Ending the production and use of single-use, disposable plastic;
2. Stopping development of new oil, gas, and petrochemical infrastructure;
3. Foster the transition zero-waste communities;
4. Implement a system where polluters pay for the impact of their products – known as extended producer responsibility (EPR);
5. Adopt and enforce ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from all sectors, including plastic production.

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