

## **For Immediate Release**

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**WHEN:** April 19, 2024; 4PM-5PM

**WHERE:** West Capitol Park, Albany, NY

**FREE TO USE PHOTOS/VIDEO AVAILABLE ON APRIL 20.**

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## **Environmentalists and Youth Call On Comptroller DiNapoli to Divest from Fossil Fuels and Israeli Bonds**

ALBANY, NY – In observance of the Global Climate Strike called for on Friday, April 19, Fridays for Future (FFF) Capital District NY—a youth-led climate justice organization—will rally [one of many protests occurring worldwide](#) in support of the ethical use of investments in the NYS Retirement Fund. FFF Capital District NY will gather from 4PM to 6PM at West Capitol Park and host a number of speakers from Jewish Voice for Peace Albany, Extinction Rebellion Capital Region, the Palestinian Task Force, as well as youth from local universities. In a rare move for environment-focused groups, FFF Capital District NY will pair the ongoing call for divestment of fossil fuel holdings with divestment from Israeli bonds, both of which worsen the climate crisis in New York and worldwide.

New York State's Common Retirement Fund has approximately [\\$267.8 million invested in Israeli Bonds](#) and more than [\\$4 billion invested in the fossil fuel industry](#). Fridays for Future (FFF) Capital District NY, a youth-led climate justice organization, partnered with local environmental and peace groups, opposes Comptroller DiNapoli's investment in the fossil fuel industry and the state of Israel on the grounds that they are ethically and financially unsound. The current use of funds violate the Green Amendment to New York's Constitution, which entitles "Each person [to the] right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment," as adopted in 2021 by direct vote.

As of last year, the NYS Common Retirement Fund still held nearly \$5 billion in fossil fuel investments, including half a billion worth of Exxon Mobil stock, one of the most notorious

architects of worldwide climate collapse and misinformation. Following more than a decade of calls for fossil fuel divestment, the Comptroller's office [announced in February a partial divestment from a handful of fossil fuel companies](#), including a divestment of a mere 5% of their Exxon Mobil holdings.

While the NYS Comptroller office's commitment to set a target for [net zero pension fund investments by 2040](#) four years ago, and has attempted [to push Exxon Mobil towards emission reductions](#), it has been evidenced by Exxon Mobil's continued pursuance of lawsuits against climate concerned shareholders that [Exxon Mobil will not be moved by attempts at shareholder activism](#). The climate movement in NYS broadly recognizes that DiNapoli is backsliding on fossil fuel divestment, meanwhile the [next two years are crucial for climate action](#).

"There is no retirement on a dead planet. At least no retirement for me, and others in my generation," said Xan Plymale, Fridays for Future local chapter organizer. "Environmental and peace organizations recognize the interconnectedness of climate resiliency and war, particularly the ecocide New York and America are funding in Palestine. Now it's up to Comptroller DiNapoli to honor the spirit of his commitments to New Yorkers."

Comptroller DiNapoli has recently directed the NYS Common Retirement Fund to invest another [\\$20 million into Israeli bonds](#), bringing NYS' pension fund to more than \$267 million invested in Israel. In the interest of effective international negotiations, climate justice, and peace, the Comptroller DiNapoli has a moral obligation to reject the messaging that New York ["will always stand with"](#) and provide financial support to Israel.

"The most important thing President Biden must do to prevent catastrophic climate change is to end the war in Gaza!" said Eleanor Stein, Jewish Voice for Peace Albany. "War and warming go hand in hand."

Israel's invasion of Gaza (in addition to violating human rights and [international law](#)) has released [massive amounts of greenhouse gasses](#). Within weeks of the start of Israel's invasion of the Gaza Strip, Israel [awarded 6 gas exploration licenses](#) for the further development of natural gas in the Gaza Marine. Israel's more long-held policies, including the blockade of the Gaza Strip, attacks on water treatment plants and refusal to allow entry of necessary parts for repair, have destroyed [food security, wetlands](#), and created a long-lasting environment of [undrinkable water](#). Israel has also systematically [removed native trees](#) and replaced them with wild-fire prone European pine. At every turn, the state of Israel decimates ecosystem resilience to climate change, harms people and planet, and exploits natural resources by intentional design.

"It isn't complicity for this country to aid and abet the colonial settler state of Israel. It is sheer duplicity: having built its pillars on the corpses of Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island, and after leading an aggressive campaign of erasing them from the historical fabric of these lands, it now provides the IOF the blueprint on how to do it to Palestinians in order to protect its foreign interests," said Safa Mammeri, Palestinian Task Force.

Israel has been emboldened by New York's continued financial support, including the most recent increase in investment by the NYS Common Retirement Fund. The health of the Southwest Asian and North African (SWANA) region, in addition to the international diplomatic landscape, hangs in the balance. In the context of Israel's disregard of international pressures, the process of international negotiations—including the implementation of international climate treaties—continue to lose efficacy.

FFF Capital District NY host regular climate strikes on the second Friday of the month, 4PM-5PM, in East Capitol Park.

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