

CARBON ACUMEN

The State of Environmental Justice in California

June 2026

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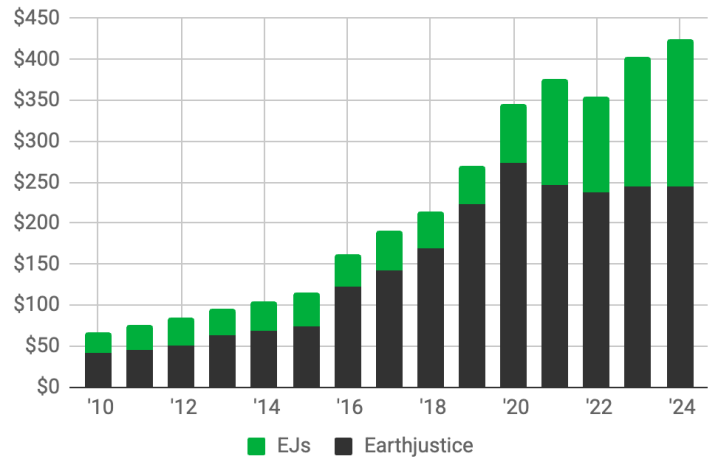
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Executive Summary

In order to give the poorest Californians living in communities with the worst air quality in the nation a voice in the public policy process, California lawmakers and regulators have given groups with ties to these communities, known as Environmental Justice (EJ) groups, multiple seats on multiple committees across multiple agencies such as CARB, CEC, CPUC, and the Governor’s Office with the intent to create a more sustainable policy by including those voices who have historically been left out of the process.

California EJ Groups + Earthjustice Net Assets (millions)



Even though inflation is hitting the poorest Californians and respective communities the hardest, the net assets of these EJ groups (ie bank accounts) have grown from \$66 million in 2010 to \$425 by the end of 2024 with the steepest increase occurring since 2020. The explosion of wealth is not the results of grassroots donations; it’s the product of a massive, coordinated \$500+ million capital injection from "Mega Foundations" tied to the nation's wealthiest individuals and families in the US as they see these EJ groups as policy proxies.

Money has flowed into these EJ groups from in-state, out-of-state, and international sources to help influence carbon policy in the 4th largest economy as the saying goes, “What happens in California typically doesn’t stay in California”. Meaning if you can achieve a policy win in the state, it is likely to spread elsewhere with little work. The sharp increase in dollars flowing into these EJ groups seems to have compromised these groups from providing effective policy ideas to California policymakers.

Whether it's the original intention or not, the money flowing from the ‘Mega Foundations’ has been used to at the very least attempt to block the usage of Biofuels across the world. At the same time California gasoline prices have steadily increased vs the national average and the state has imported a record amount of gasoline including importing gasoline made from Iranian crude processed at refineries in India at record levels.

California has the ability to reduce gasoline prices by nearly \$1/gallon - and lower port emissions - by implementing an equitable tax structure that incentivizes E15 over E10, thus boosting American-sourced and made fuel while reducing reliance on foreign imports. The open question remains whether EJ organizations will support this practical, progressive solution or continue employing obstructionist tactics to serve the ideological and tax-avoidance agendas of their billionaire donors.

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Current Structure with Regulatory Bodies

Under SB 535, CalEPA identifies "disadvantaged communities" (DACs) that suffer most from combined environmental, health, and economic burdens, such as pollution, poverty, and high disease rates. To represent these areas, state agencies (CARB, CEC, CPUC, and the Governor's Office) appoint Community Based Organizations—typically 501(c)(3) Environmental Justice (EJ) nonprofits—to committees to help shape policy and bridge the socioeconomic gaps between DACs and the rest of California.



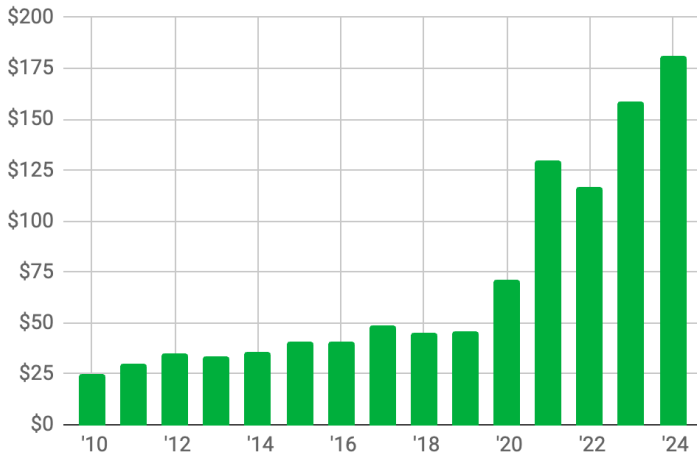
The following EJ organizations have sat on the CARB, CEC/CPUC, Governor appointed committees over the years to help shape policy through an outside lens, specifically those living in DACs.

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN)	Earthjustice
California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA)	Environmental Health Coalition (EHC)
Center on Race Poverty & Environment (CRPE)	The Greenlining Institute
Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN)	Grid Alternatives
Central California Asthma Collaborative (CCAC)	Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability (LCJA)
Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)	Little Manila Rising
Comite Civico Del Valle	Physicians for Social Responsibility - LA (PSRLA)
Communities for A Better Environment (CBE)	Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE)

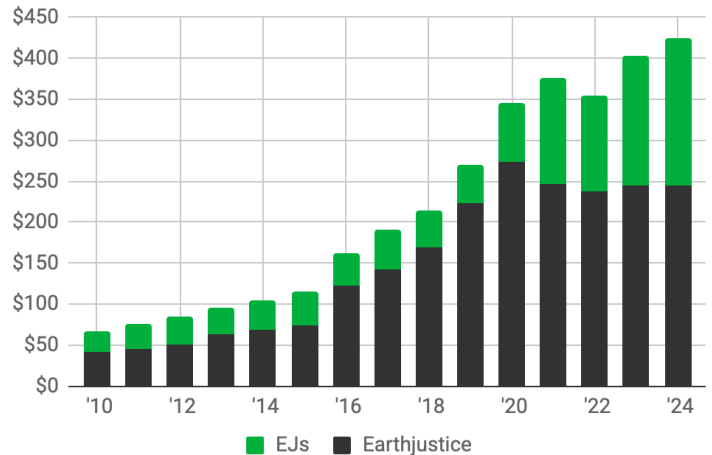
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Prior to 2020, the potential policy making influence of these committees seemed to be largely ignored as the net assets of the California EJ groups (excluding Earthjustice) sat below \$50 million collectively across 15 organizations. However this seemed to change come 2020 as the net assets of California EJ groups rapidly ballooned to over \$180 million by the end of 2024. Once you add in the net assets of Earthjustice, the groups which are supposed to represent the poorest Californians had a combined net assets value of \$425 million - largely held in cash or cash equivalent - a sharp increase from the \$66 million in net assets they held collectively in 2010.

California EJ Groups Net Assets (millions)



California EJ Groups + Earthjustice Net Assets (millions)



To fund the growth in net assets from \$269 million in 2019 to \$425 million by the end of 2024, EJ groups received \$280 million in the form of grants from other non-profits while Earthjustice received \$279 million over the same time frame totalling a whopping \$531 million in a 5 year span (2020-2024).

\$252 million



\$279 million



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Funding Apparatus

It shouldn't be a secret as to where the money came from but how it flowed to organizations sitting on these committees involving policy making in the 4th largest economy in the world only behind the US, China, and Germany. There are only a select few individuals/families in the nation who can afford shifting \$531 million to organizations in the name of policy. Mega Foundations held by the nation's wealthiest individuals/families for tax write-offs hold over \$73 billion in net assets, again largely held in cash or cash equivalents (stocks, bonds, etc). This money has flowed directly from the Mega Foundation itself or indirectly to via Donor Advised Funds (DAFs) and Intermediate Foundations with a specific purpose

Mega Foundations → Directly to Groups: \$224 million (\$64 million to EJs, \$180 million to Earthjustice)

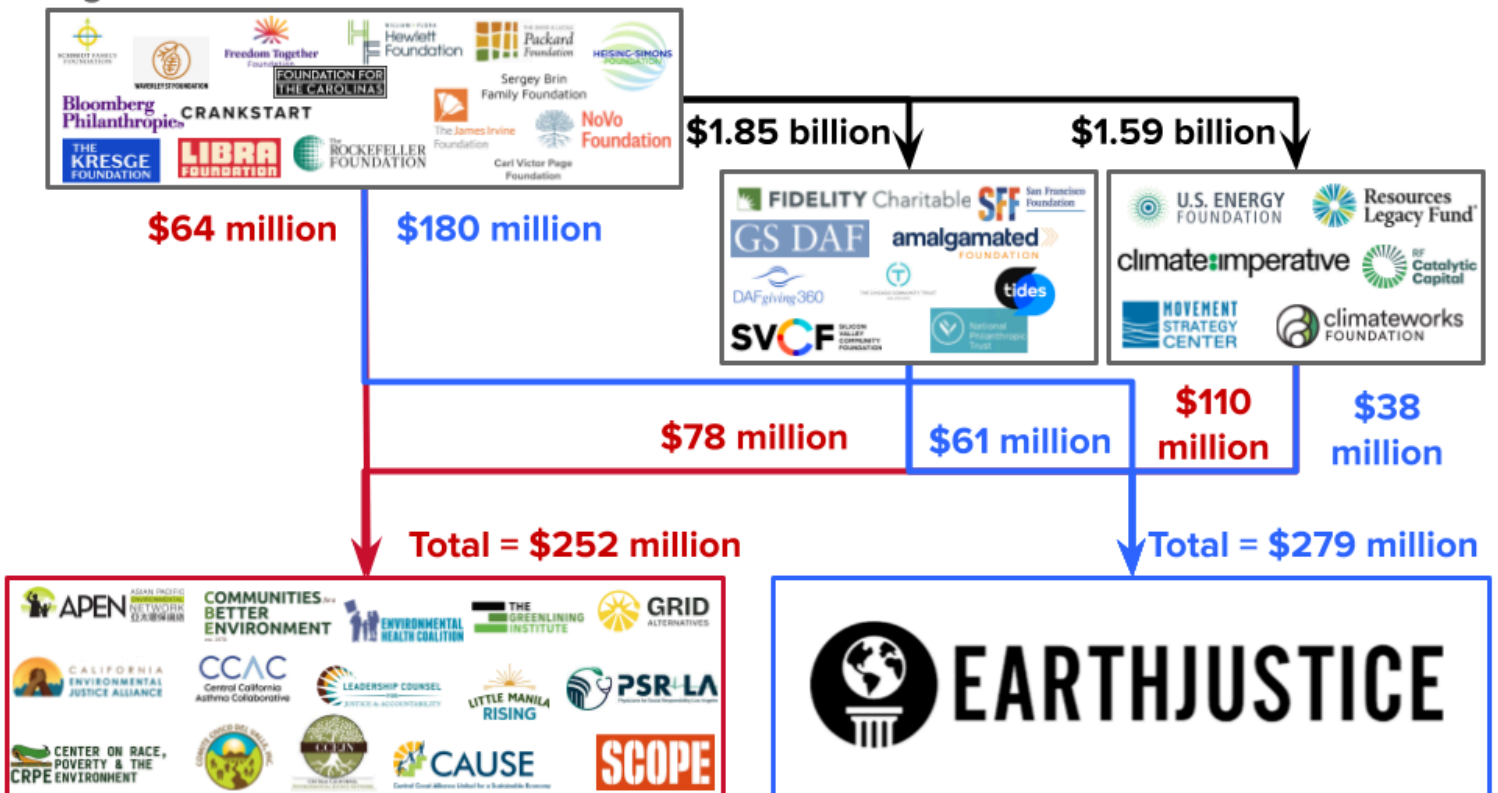
Mega Foundations → DAFs: \$1.85 billion

DAFs → Groups: \$139 million (\$78 million to EJs, \$61 million to Earthjustice)

Mega Foundations → Intermediate Foundations: \$1.59 billion

Intermediate Foundations → Groups: \$148 million (\$110 million to EJs, \$38 million to Earthjustice)

Mega Foundations



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The Mega Foundations directly or indirectly funding EJ Groups and Earthjustice are tied to the wealthiest individuals/families in which they derived their fortunes from technology, finance, and hospitality who are mostly sitting on the East or West Coast of the US.

Mega Foundation	Net Assets (millions)	Notable People/Connection
Bloomberg Family Foundation	\$13,842	Michael Bloomberg
Crankstart Foundation	\$4,257	Sequoia Capital partner Michael Moritz
David and Lucile Packard Foundation	\$8,225	David Packard, Co-Founder of Hewlett-Packard
Foundation for the Carolinas	\$3,848	Fred Stanback, college roommate of Warren Buffett
Freedom Together Foundation	\$3,362	Barbara Picower, widow of Jeffrey Picower (Bernie Madoff scandal)
Heising Simons Foundation	\$721	Liz Simons, daughter of Jim Simons (Renaissance Technologies)
James Irvine Foundation	\$3,331	The Irvine Company
Kresge Foundation	\$3,868	K-Mart
Novo Foundation	\$798	Peter Buffett, son of Warren Buffett
Sea Change Foundation	\$207	Nat Simons, son of Jim Simons
Sergey Brin Family Foundation	\$4,023	Sergey Brin, Co-Founder of Google
The Carl Victor Page Memorial Foundation	\$4,452	Larry Page, Co-Founder of Google
The Libra Foundation	\$428	Nicholas Pritzker, Hyatt Hotels
The Rockefeller Foundation	\$5,584	Rockefeller Family
The Schmidt Family Foundation	\$1,929	Eric Schmidt, former Google Chairman
Waverley Street Foundation	\$2,738	Laurene Powell Jobs, widow of Steve Jobs
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	\$13,842	William Hewlett, Co-Founder of Hewlett-Packard
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$73,731	

Washing “Foreign” Money, Buying a Chair, Lex Wexner Money

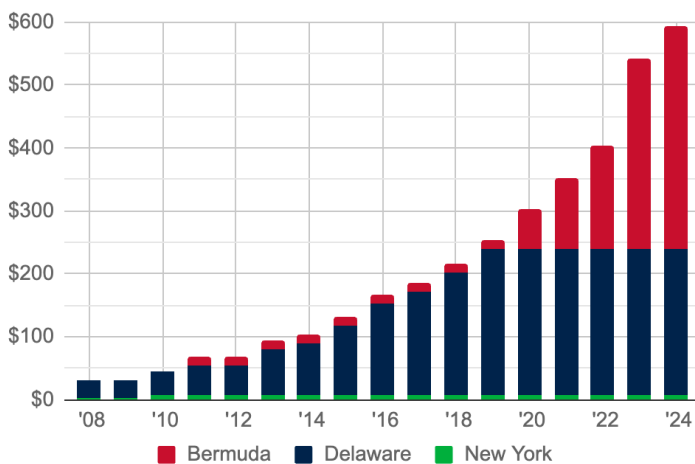
One of the leaks from the “Paradise Papers” was how Jim Simons, the founder of Renaissance Technologies, built a hidden offshore fortune of \$8+ billion in the tax haven of Bermuda via the [Lord Jim Trust](#) which was set up by a Simons family friend. The trust was then updated over the years to benefit Simon's children. Two of Jim Simons children, Nat Simons (Sea Change Foundation) and Liz Simons (Heising Simons Foundation) run two large Mega Foundations which have given directly or indirectly to EJ groups in California.

Since Bermuda does not have corporate, income, or capital gains taxes, assets within the trust could grow exponentially without owing US taxes if never sold within the trust in Bermuda. If the assets are then shifted over to a US based foundation as a gift and then sold, overall taxes owed on the sale are only up to 1.39% on the capital gains depending on how the asset is transferred and sold.

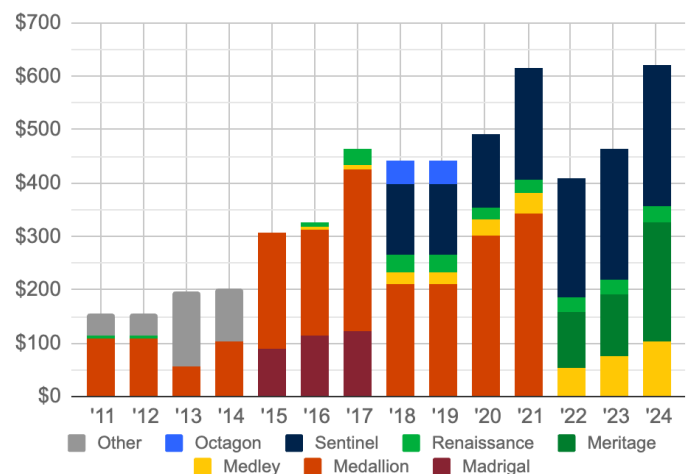
Contributions to the Heising Simons Foundation have been made via various Trusts belonging to Liz Simons located in Delaware, New York, and Bermuda. Initially contributions made to the Heising Simons Foundation were largely made from the Trusts in Delaware or straight from Jim Simons in New York, however that changed in 2020 when the majority, if not all, of the annual contributions to the Heising Simons foundation came from Trusts in Bermuda. Since 2008, the Heising Simons Foundation has received nearly \$600 million in contributions with \$354 million coming from Bermuda.

At the end of 2023, the Heising Simons Foundation had [\\$795 million in net assets](#) with over \$600 million being deemed as ‘Other Investments’ or in large funds with holdings in funds held by the famous Renaissance Technologies along with funds held at Liz Simons husband's fund (Medley, Sentinel) and at her brother's firm (Meritage Group). The Heising Simons Foundation also used to hold assets in the famous Renaissance Medallion fund.

Heising-Simons Foundation Contributor Locations (millions)



Heising-Simons Foundation Investments (millions)

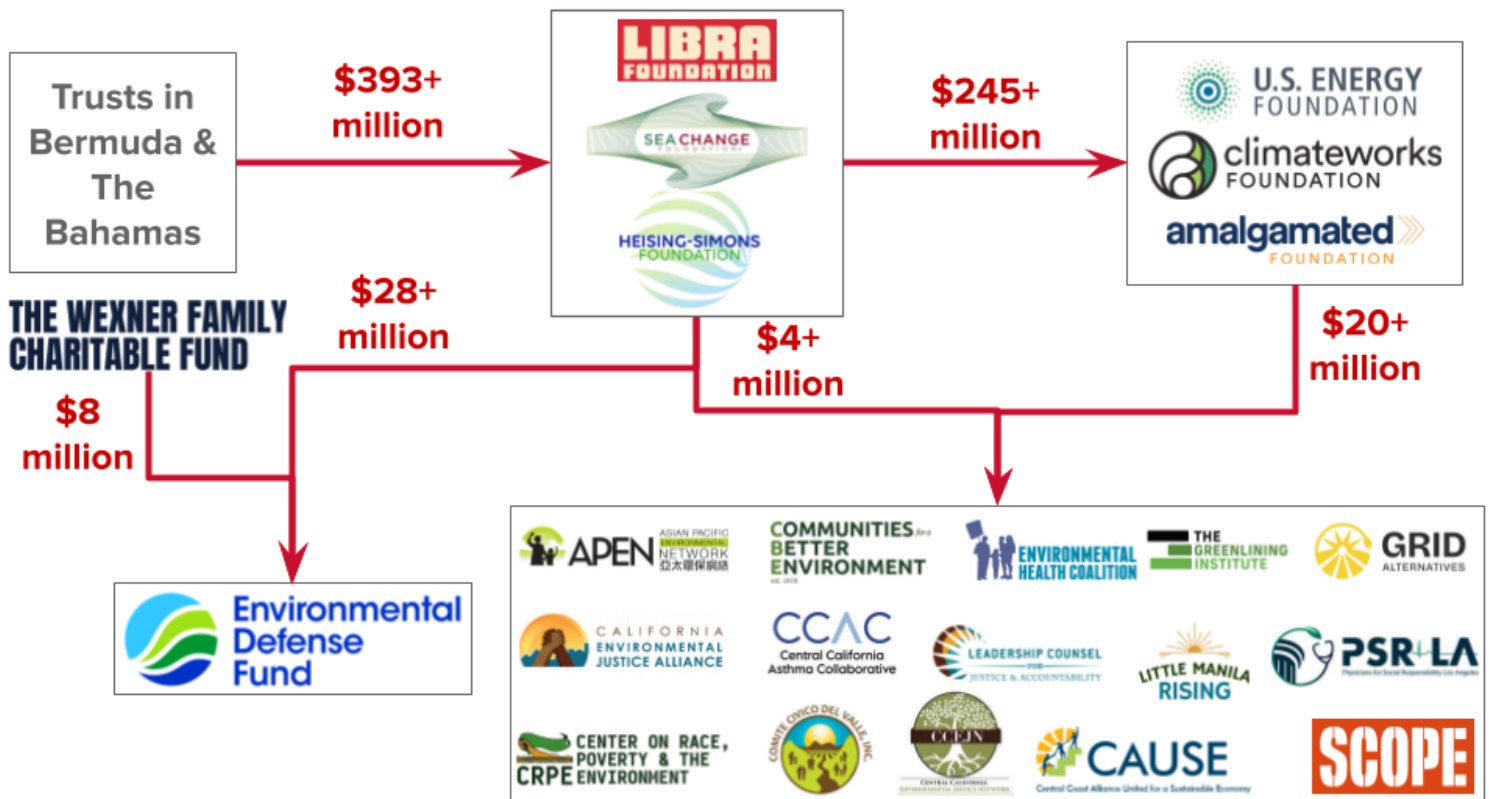


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This sophisticated maneuver of shifting assets or money from foreign trusts to US foundations is not exclusive to the Heising Simons Foundation as the Libra Foundation (Pritzker) and the Sea Change Foundation (Nat Simons) have also contributed money to their foundations from trusts located in Bermuda or The Bahamas. Over the past 20 years, these 3 foundations have shifted over \$393 million to their US foundations. In the past 5 years, these Mega foundations have subsequently given over \$4 million directly to EJ groups along with \$245 million to Intermediate Foundations such as US Energy Foundation, ClimateWorks Foundation, and Amalgamated Foundation who in turn have given EJ groups over \$20 million.

The Heising Simons Foundation has donated over \$28 million to the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF). [Mark Heising \(Liz Simon's husband\) has been the Chair of EDF since 2021.](#) In an odd move, EDF has received \$8 million from the Wexner Charitable Family Fund during his tenure as Chair. The Wexner Charitable Family Fund was funded by Lex Wexner who has been directly linked to the notorious Jeffrey Epstein.

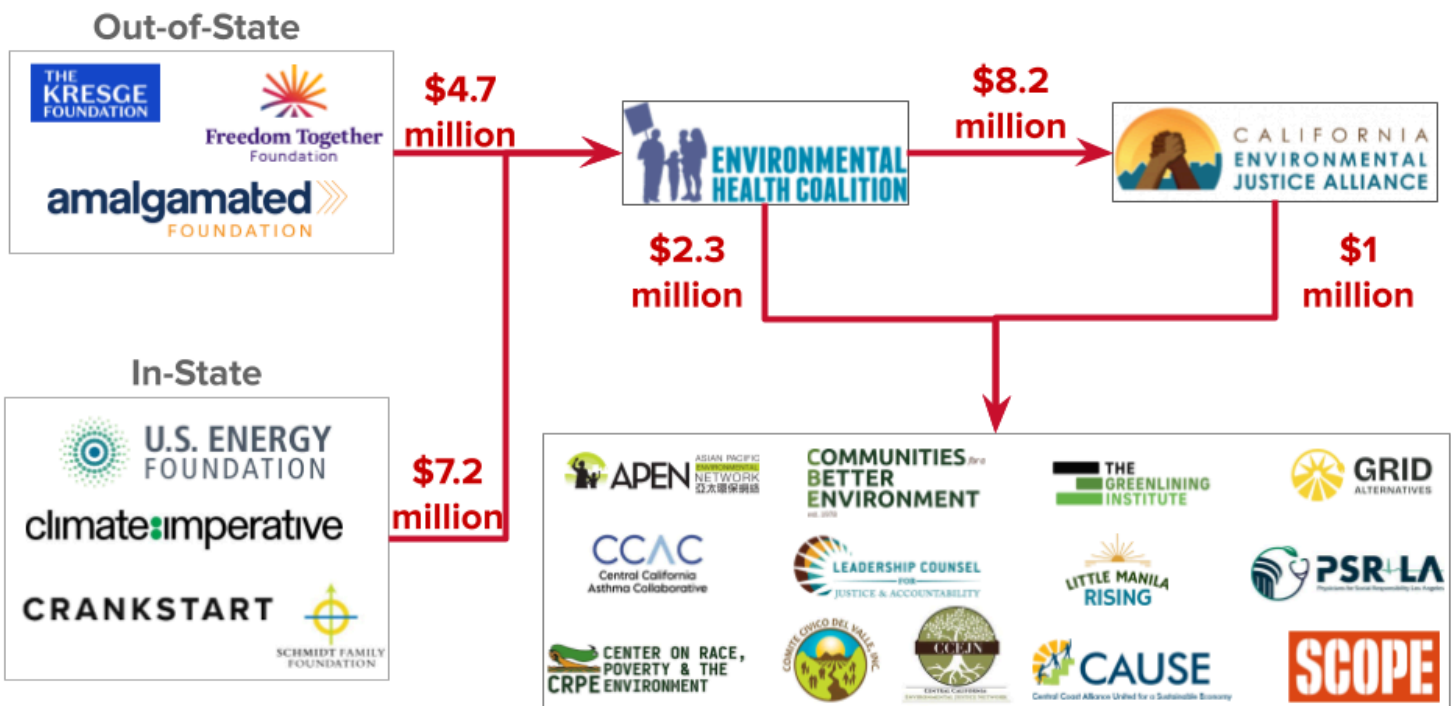
[EDF sits on CARB's Independent Emissions Market Advisory Committee \(IEMAC\)](#) which analyzes California's cap-and-invest program and reports findings to CARB and the Legislature. The committee includes a Legislative Analyst's Office representative and five market experts appointed by the Governor (three), the Senate (one), and the Assembly Speaker (one).



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Out-of-State Money via CARB Board Member to sue CARB?

[Diane Takvorian](#) was appointed to sit on CARB's board in 2018 as the public member. She is Executive Director and co-founder of Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) along with being the co-founder of the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA). Over the 5-year span of 2020-2024, according to Form 990s filed to the IRS, the largest contributor to EHC has been an out-of-state foundation, Freedom Together Foundation which was funded by the Estate of Jeffrey Picower who illegally received billions of dollars of distributions from the Bernie Madoff scandal. Shortly after getting caught, Jeffrey Picower passed away and left his estate to his widow, Barbara Picower, who in turn had to turn in a record amount of \$7.2 billion back to the Madoff Ponzi Scheme victims. Freedom Together Foundation has donated the most in recent years to EHC to the tune of \$2.8 million. Over \$3 million has flowed to respective EJ groups via EHC directly or via CEJA. There are currently two EJ groups suing CARB who EHC has provided grants to: (1) Communities for a Better Environment and (2) Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability. Both are suing CARB over the latest LCFS amendment process in which Diane Takvorian voted against in November 2024.



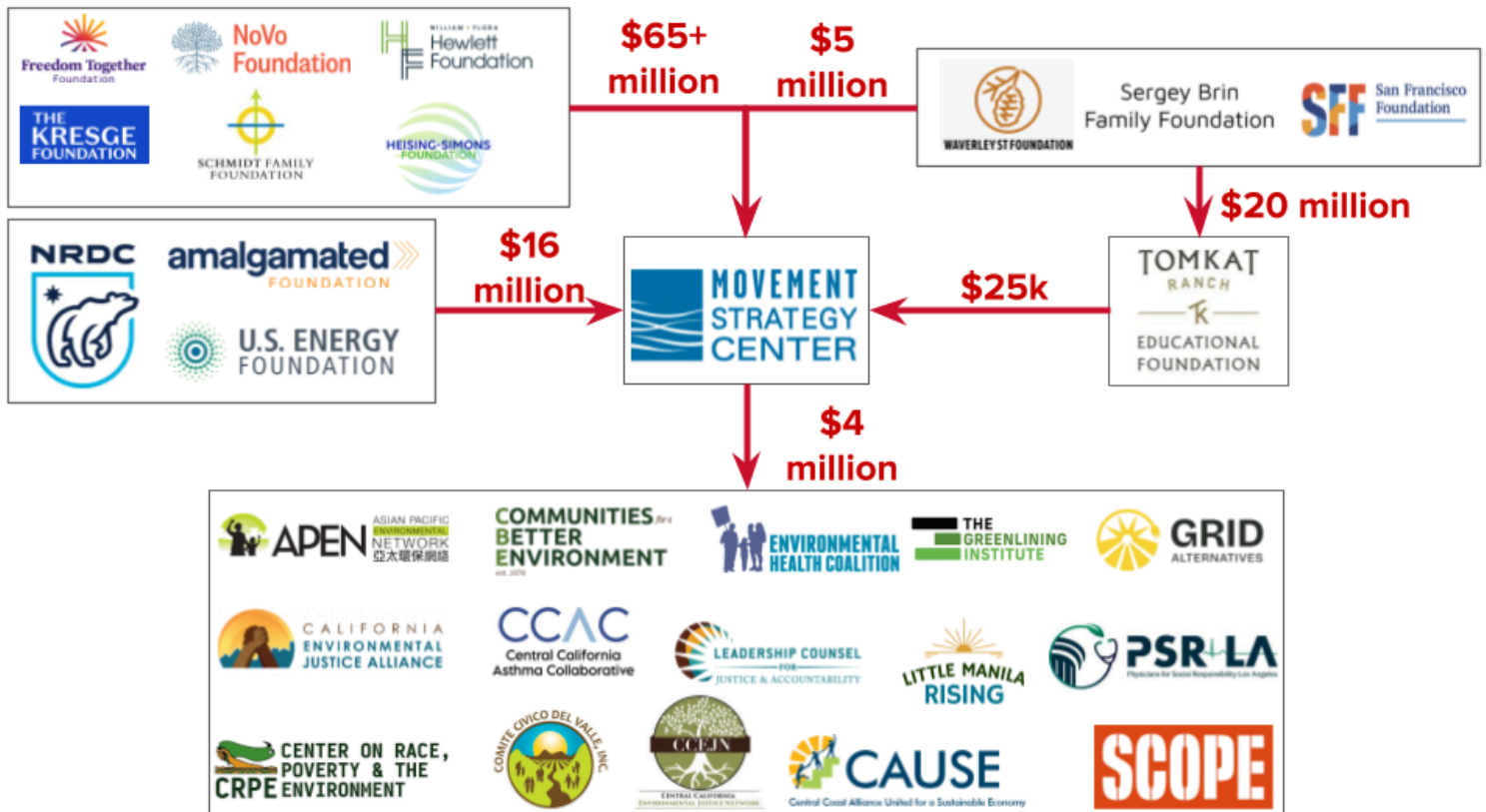
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Getting Money from Tom Steyer and His Cows

Tom Steyer is currently one of the front runners for the Governor of California in 2026 but as of writing this piece, it is not clear whether he has enough votes to get to one of the top two spots in order to advance to the general election in November. One of the main topics Steyer has run on is the idea of taxing billionaires. However, like most billionaires, he has a knack of avoiding taxes while influencing policy (one reason he is a billionaire) via his Nextgen (Nextgen Policy, Nextgen America, Nextgen Education Fund), KatTom, and TomKat non-profits.

Tom Steyer and his wife Kat Taylor own a 1,800 acre ranch located in Pescadero under TomKat Ranch LLC. While TomKat Ranch LLC owns the land, TomKat Ranch Educational Foundation (TKREF) runs the day-to-day operations. TKREF has received millions from Tom Steyer along with \$20 million from Waverley St (Laurene Powell Jobs), Sergey Brin Foundation, and the San Francisco Foundation.

In a roundabout way of indirectly giving money to EJ groups, The TomKat Ranch Educational Foundation has given \$25k to the Movement Strategy Center which has also received \$85+ million from similar Mega Foundations and Intermediate Foundations. The Movement Strategy Center which has \$45 million of net assets has given \$4 million to EJ groups since 2020.

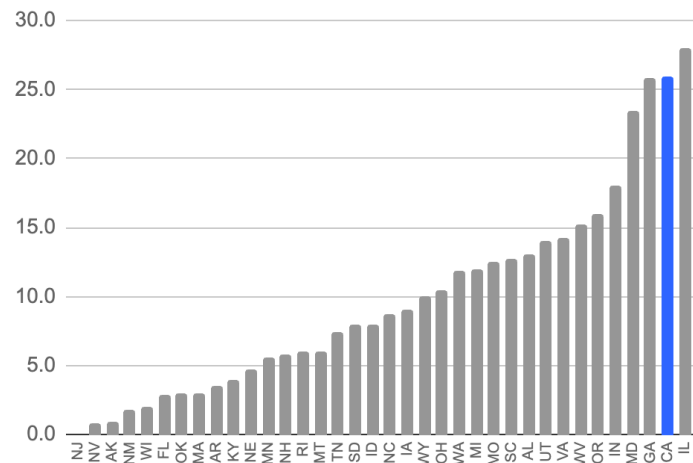


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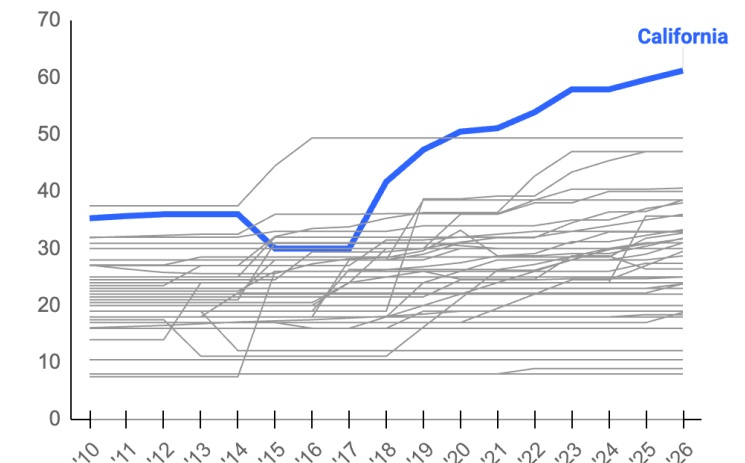
California Gasoline Excise Tax & Refinery Margin Penalty

Due to the federal government not increasing the federal gasoline and diesel excise tax to pay for roads since 1990, states across the country have had to increase their own excise tax rates to make sure potholes get filled and bridges get fixed. Although this is not a ‘blue’ state issue but a state vs federal problem, California decided to implement the most regressive tax increase in the nation with the passage of the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 helping to double the [gasoline excise tax in California from 30 cpg in 2017 to over 61 cpg in 2026](#). At the time EVs were not affordable whatsoever and EJ groups actually threw their support behind the idea of increasing the tax with the [only caveat being that they wanted a say where the money was to be spent](#). Proposition 6 was on the ballot in 2018 to repeal the annual increases but [opposition led by Tom Steyer](#) helped to kill the Prop.

Gasoline Excise Tax Increase vs 2010 (cpg)

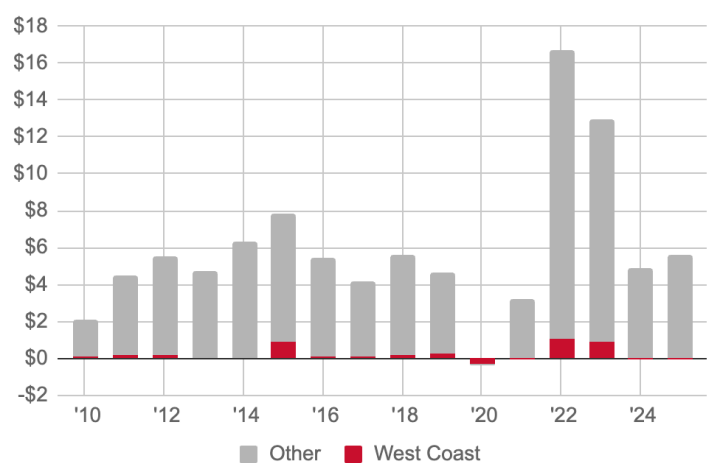


Gasoline Excise Tax by State (cpg)



After Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, gasoline prices shot up across the country setting all-time record prices with [California setting the record](#) for the average price of \$6.43 in June of 2022. [EJ groups along with Tom Steyer](#) saw this opportunity to push for a price gouging penalty known as the ‘Refinery Margin Penalty’ looking to cap refinery profits from excessive profits. Even though Tom Steyer made his billions via Farallon Capital, he forgot to check the [financials of Valero](#) which showed the company has only made \$3.3 billion in net income from their West Coast operations since 2010, the equivalent of less than 5 cents per gallon. Shortly after P66 announced they were going to cease operations at the LA refinery, Valero decided to shut down their Benicia refinery due to poor asset performance.

Valero Annual Operating Income (billions)



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Setting Up 501(c)(4)s

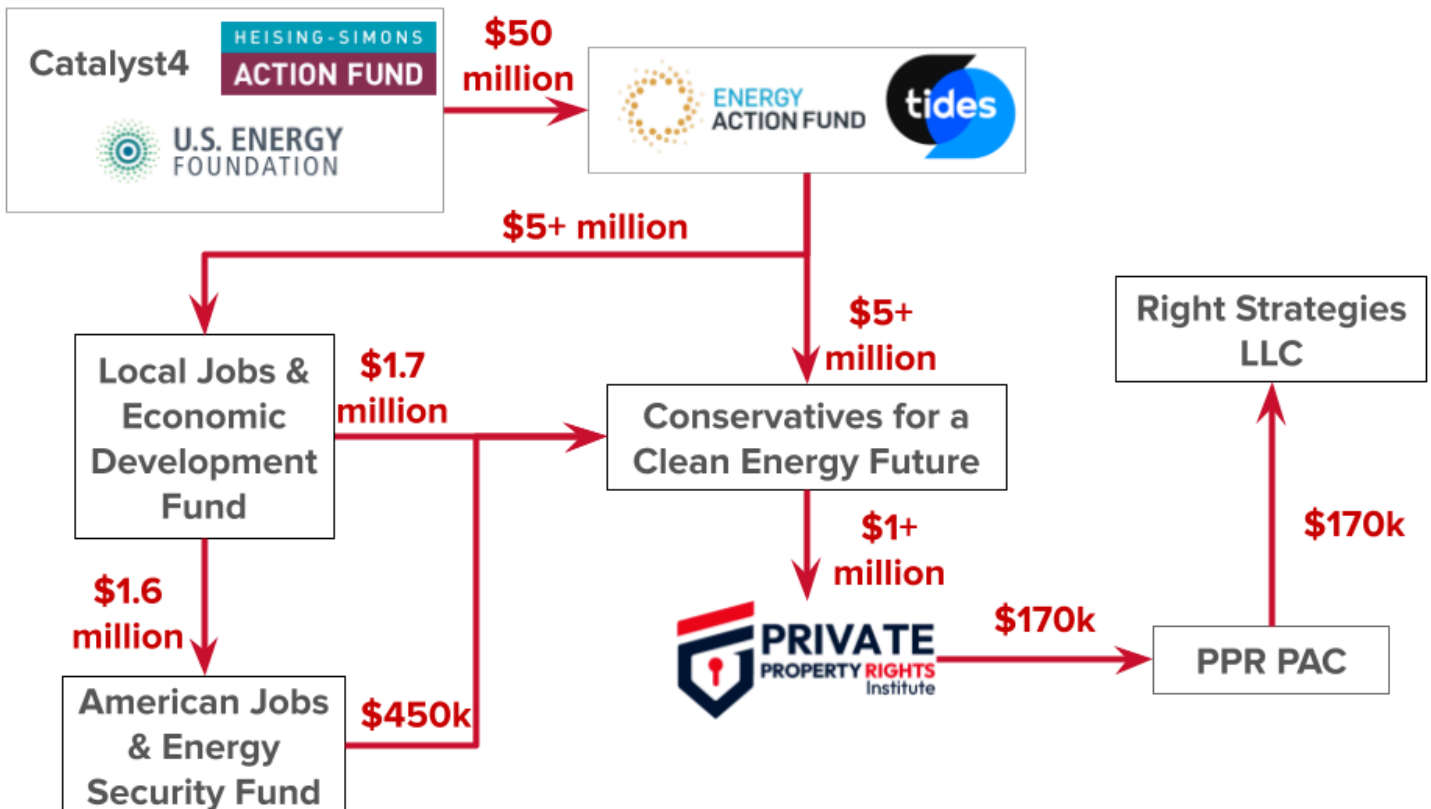
Mega Foundations such as the Heising-Simons Foundation and the Sergey Brin Family Foundation have corresponding 501(c)(4)s which can legally participate in political activity in support of or opposition to candidates for office. EJ groups along with large environmental groups such as NRDC, EDF, and Earthjustice also have a corresponding 501(c)(4).

501(c)(3)	501(c)(4)
<u>Heising Simons Foundation</u>	<u>Heising Simons Action</u>
<u>Sergey Brin Foundation</u>	<u>Catalyst4</u>
<u>US Energy Foundation</u>	<u>Energy Action Fund</u>
<u>Earthjustice</u>	<u>Earthjustice Action</u>
<u>Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)</u>	<u>EDF Action</u>
<u>Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)</u>	<u>NRDC Action</u>
<u>Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN)</u>	<u>APEN Action</u>
<u>California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA)</u>	CEJA Action*
<u>Center on Race Poverty & Environment (CRPE)</u>	CRPE Action
The Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ)	CCA EJ Action
<u>Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)</u>	CAUSE Action Fund
<u>Communities for A Better Environment (CBE)</u>	CBE Action*
<u>Environmental Health Coalition (EHC)</u>	<u>Environmental Health & Justice Campaign</u>
<u>Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability (LCJA)</u>	Leadership Counsel Action*
<u>Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE)</u>	SCOPE Action*

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Disguising Money to Block CO2 Pipelines

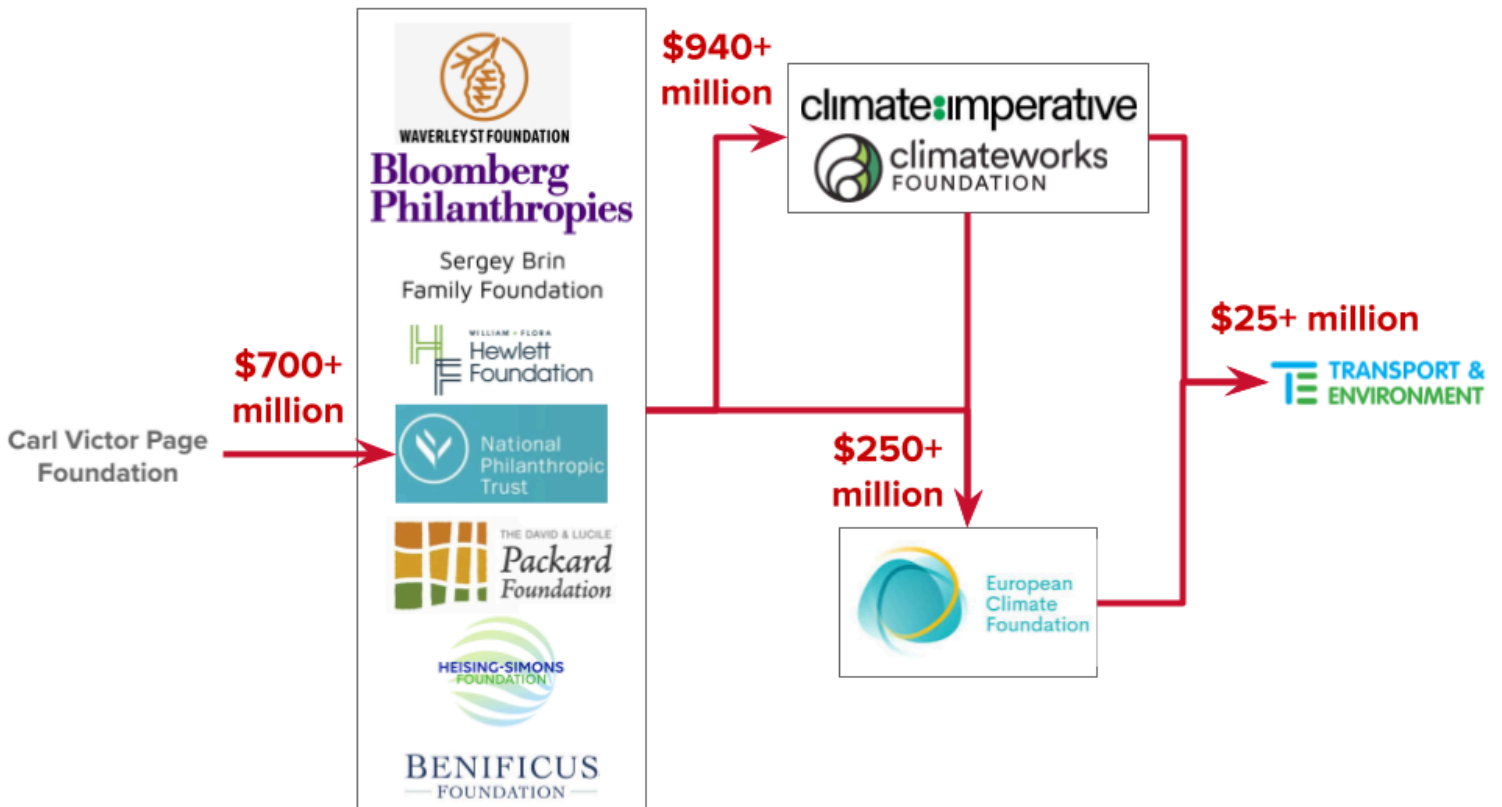
Under 45Q of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), sequestered carbon via CO2 pipelines can receive a tax credit of up to \$85/MT of CO2 that is successfully captured and permanently sequestered. Following the passage of the IRA, multiple CO2 pipelines in the Midwest deriving from ethanol plants were announced to go under construction. However, there has been major backlash from land owners within multiple Midwest states where these pipelines were to go in due to potential eminent domain overreach. In the most bizarre finding in this research, it looks as if some of the money used to educate the public via texts, emails, and phone calls came from organizations with direct ties to the Mega Foundations sitting on the West Coast. Money from Catalyst4 (Sergey Brin), Heising-Simons Action Fund, along with US Energy Foundation has seemed to trickle down to a group located in Lansing, Michigan with 0 employees known as [Conservatives for a Clean Energy Future](#) and Private Property Rights Institute whose Executive Director served on the [Trump campaign and is a regular contributor to BBC, OAN, and Newsmax](#). The money eventually flowed into [Right Strategies LLC](#) in Iowa who specializes in grassroots voter contact, campaign strategy, and training for [first-time conservative candidates](#). Historically, Right Strategies LLC has been the communications team for candidates in Iowa running on the issue of [eminent domain abuse for CO2 pipelines](#) deriving from ethanol plants such as the [Summit Navigator pipeline which ended up being cancelled in 2023](#).



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Blocking Biofuels in Europe

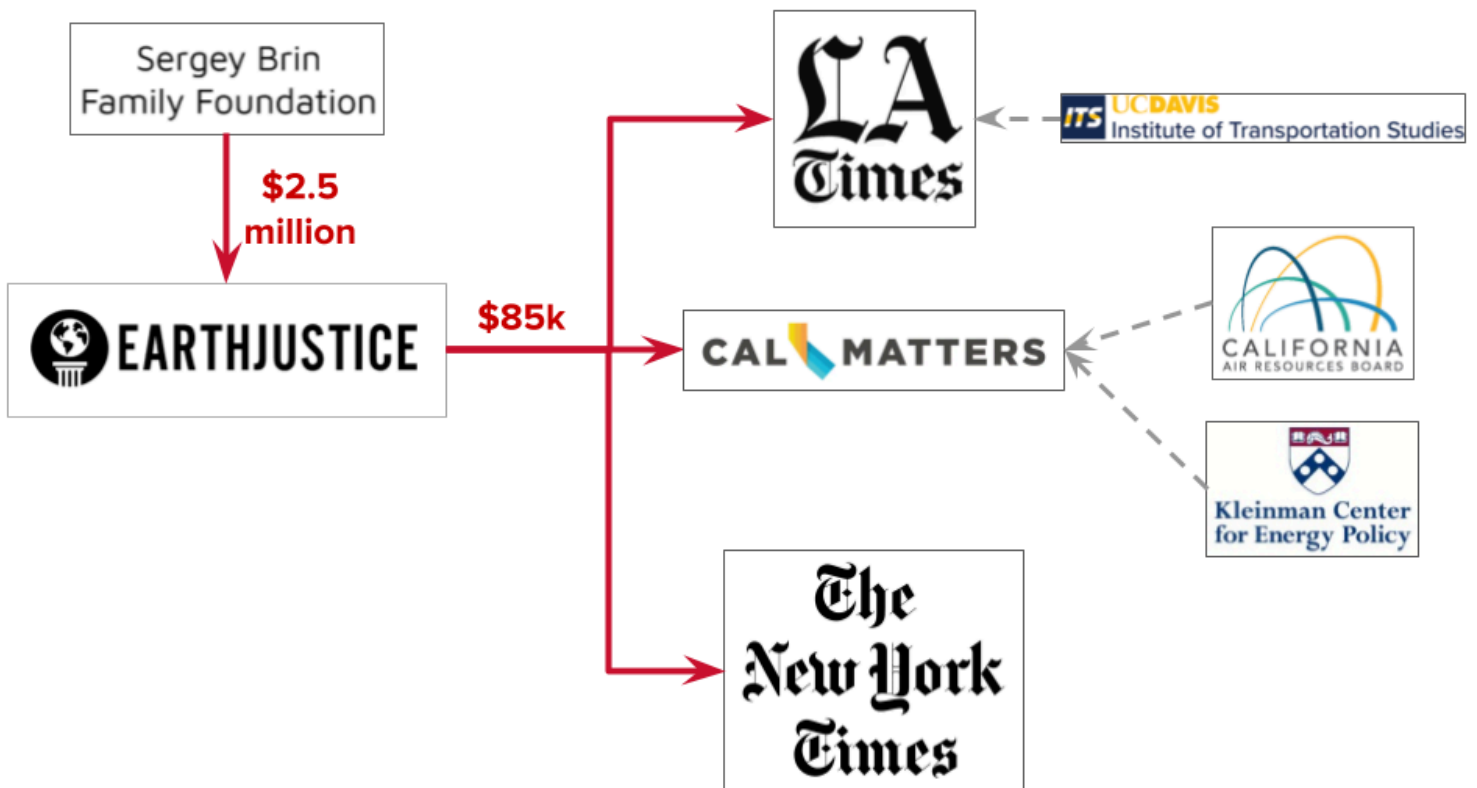
Not only have the Mega Foundations funded EJ groups in California along with large Enviro groups in the US (Sierra Club, NRDC, EDF, Earthjustice et al) but they have also funneled money internationally to organizations known as 'Regional Climate Foundations' (RCFs). Similar to the funding of the EJ and Enviro groups to the tune of hundreds of millions into the billions of dollars, the US Mega Foundations have also funneled over \$250 million directly or indirectly via Climate Imperative and ClimatWorks Foundations into the [European Climate Foundation](#). By doing so, the select wealthiest individuals/families in the US have essentially bought power in the EU to help shape carbon policy. Most recently Europe effectively banned Soybean Oil based fuels from receiving credits under the updated Renewable Energy Directive (RED III). Transport & Environment which has received \$25 million from US based foundations successfully lobbied the European Commission to adjust its Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC) framework. By shifting the baseline data to track global deforestation from 2014 onward instead of 2008, the updated calculations revealed that 14+% of recent soy expansion occurred on high-carbon land (ie Brazil). This pushed Soybean Oil past the EU's strict 10% environmental risk threshold, thus reclassifying it alongside Palm Oil as a "high ILUC-risk" feedstock. Therefore, Soybean Oil was stripped of its green incentives and placed on a strict, linear trajectory toward a mandatory phase-out to 0% by 2030.



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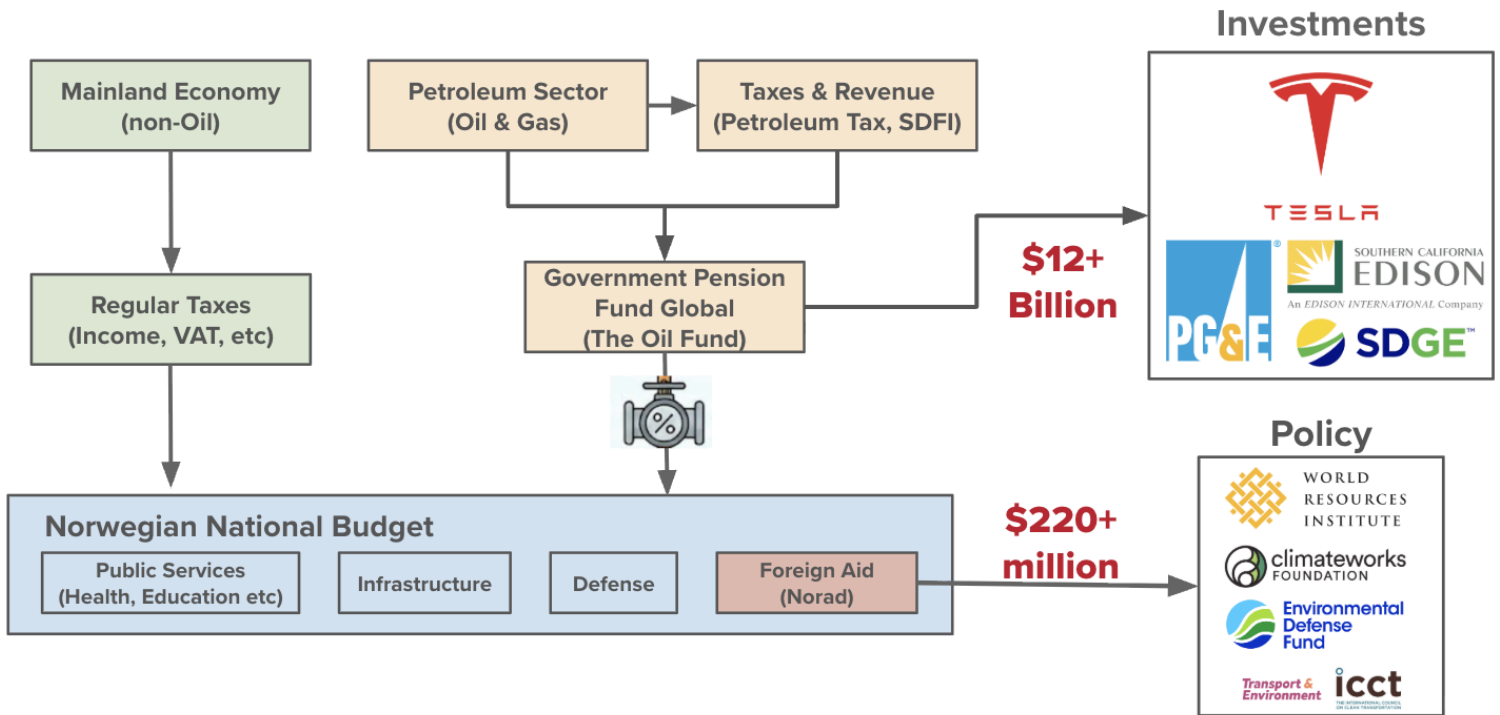
Blocking Biofuels in California

During the last LCFS amendment process, the CARB board was supposed to vote on the proposed amendments in Q1 2024 but was punted to the following Q4 after the Governor's office received a letter from Earthjustice to do so. Shortly after, an ongoing media frenzy ensued which included an op-ed written in the LA Times by UC Davis professors which included the “Godfather of the LCFS program” [Dan Sperling warning the new amendments could cause the rainforest to burn down](#). An op-ed was also written by Cal Matters written by a professor from the UPenn Kleinman Center for Energy Policy who also sits on the IEMAC warning the [new LCFS amendments could raise gas prices in California by 50 cpg](#). Dean Florez, a member on CARB's board at the time of the vote also wrote an [op-ed in Cal Matters](#) to why he did not vote for the new amendments citing increased costs at the pump. However, these series of op-eds could have been a [“Wrap-Up Smear” campaign](#) paid for by Earthjustice. According to CalAccess, Earthjustice made payments to these news outlets to influence policy under the “Right to Zero” campaign along with a payment made to the New York Times where [Earthjustice was magically quoted regarding LCFS](#). And according to IRS documents, the Sergey Brin Family Foundation donated \$2.5 million in 2023 to Earthjustice specifically to support the Earthjustice Right to Zero Transportation Program. In the decade preceding 2024 and the quarters afterwards, Earthjustice has not made payments to these news organizations to influence policy in California.



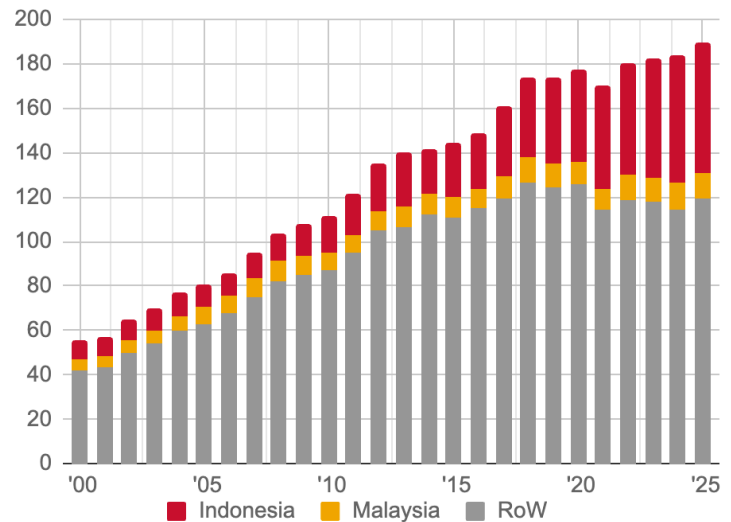
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Following the ongoing calls from Enviros and Academia to cap LCFS crediting to Renewable Diesel (RD) along with public heat CARB was taking regarding the RD feedstock issue, CARB staff then introduced a 20% credit cap for Biomass Based Diesel (RD and Bio) made from Soybean Oil, Canola Oil, and Sunflower Oil. Unbeknownst to many in the LCFS rulemaking process, the original research [provided by ICCT in 2020](#) to set the 20% LCFS cap was funded by the government of Norway as their pension fund invested over [\\$12 billion into the 'Electrification of Transportation sector in California.](#)



The main issue Enviros and Academia had with Biofuels at that time, specifically RD, related to burning down rainforests to plant palm trees to backfill the lost veggie oil on the international market known as the 'Palm Oil Backfill Theory'. Similar to Tom Steyer not checking Valero's financials, Enviros and Academia did not check to see where growth in the usage of Palm Oil and Palm Kernel Oil (PKO) came from. According to the USDA, worldwide consumption of Palm Oil and Palm Kernel Oil (PKO) has increased over the past 5-10 years. However, the growth largely hinged on increased consumption where the virgin oil was produced (Indonesia and Malaysia) while consumption in the Rest of the World (RoW) flatlined at around 115-120 billion lbs. Meaning, the use of North America Soybean Oil and Canola to produce RD did not cause Palm and PKO to backfill the world veggie oil market.

World Palm Oil + PKO Consumption (billion lbs)



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Disadvantaged Communities vs EJ Organizations

On one hand you could make the case that bored ass billionaires with too much money have figured out a way to have more political influence as they have bought the 'voices of the poor' via these EJ organizations; and on the other hand you could make the case they just need an outlet for a portion of their \$73 billion dollars so they can get a tax break. Maybe it is both, who knows what the actual intent actually is. And who knows if they (bored ass billionaires) will actually tell you the truth. It is weird in a time where inflation has hit the poorest Californians the hardest, the voices that are supposed to be speaking for them are these 'EJ groups' who have magically seen their own bank accounts grow by hundreds of millions via from the wealthiest individuals/families in the world.

To make matters worse, the stances these EJ groups have taken when it comes to California carbon policy have been on the wrong side of reality: Renewable Diesel made from Soybean Oil or Canola Oil did not burn down the rainforests SE Asia or Brazil, LCFS did not cause gasoline prices to go up by 50-65 cpg, some refiners were not making hand-over-fist via the "Mystery Gasoline Surcharge" as the Valero Benicia and P66 LA refineries have closed leading to California importing gasoline made in India made from Iranian crude, EVs can't get over 30% of new sales without major financial incentive, and not to mention EJ Groups throwing support against the most regressive tax increase in the nation.

"...California imports 60% of its crude oil, 25% of its diesel, 20% of its gasoline, and similar amounts of jet fuel. And we're in a situation where world energy markets are tight. And prices are going up everywhere. California has long been the highest priced state in the country because the policies have been constraining. Supply and demand is continuing to be very robust in a state where supply has been consciously constrained by policy..."

[-Mike Wirth \(Chevron Chairman & CEO\) Bloomberg TV Interview, May 29, 2026](#)

Mike Wirth is right. So let's do something about it.

There is a 'Progressive' way to lower gasoline prices by nearly \$1/gallon in California by creating an equitable tax structure (not the regressive pay-per-mile idea) which incentivizes the use of E15 vs E10 in the gasoline pool in California. By doing so Californians could see less emissions at the ports due to importing less crude and gasoline from foreign sources while lowering gasoline prices and price volatility by increasing the 'American sourced and made' fuel blend.

Will these EJ groups be on board with this idea of more Biofuels (corn ethanol) or will they employ the same tactics to block the possibility of lower gasoline prices to push the ideology of non-California residents such as Michael Bloomberg, Larry Page, Sergey Brin, Barbara Picower, along with some of the Stanback, Walton, Pritzker, and Simons families so they can avoid paying taxes over those living poorest communities in California with the worst air quality in the nation?

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