

"Petroleum Windfall Profits Penalty" Hearing Conflicted Witnesses Backgrounder

1.) [John Wenger](#)

A lobbyist for the firm Sloat Higgins Jensen & Associates [dating back to January 2015](#), Wenger will appear representing Sloat's client Clean Fuels & Convenience Alliance. That Alliance does not list its members online.

However, Chevron – a client of Wenger's – has served as both a [sponsor](#) of the organization's PAC, the California Fuels and Convenience Alliance, as recently as 2022 via the company and three of its gas stations. Chevron is also the leading [Showcase Sponsor](#) for the Alliance's forthcoming 2023 conference, [featuring a keynote address](#) by climate denier [Alex Epstein](#). Chevron has itself disclosed [consistent membership status](#) in the Alliance dating back to 2020.

Beyond the Alliance, Wenger has also in the past [lobbied](#) for Chevron, one of the Big 5 California refiners. He has also lobbied for Aera Energy, a JV of ExxonMobil and Shell.

During his time lobbying for Aera, Wenger advocated against legislation that would have enabled [further transparency for chemicals](#) used in fracking and other well stimulation techniques; [required that drillers](#) "monitor for below ground oil production tanks and facilities, and disposal and injection wells"; and [ensured that](#) the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (then DOGGR, now CalGEM) mandate that the oil industry makes available drilling data on a more transparent basis.

For Chevron, Wenger [lobbied](#) during the most recent session against both the now-sanctified [oil wells setbacks law](#) signed by Governor Gavin Newsom in 2022 (he also [lobbied against](#) its predecessor, AB 345), as well as the [Corporate Climate Accountability Act](#), legislation that would mandate industries operating within California disclose their greenhouse gas emissions inventories. Further, Wenger lobbied against [legislation](#) to mandate more disclosure within the state's market-based offsets programs seeking to curtail greenhouse gas emissions. In 2020, Wenger also [lobbied](#) against legislation that would mandate disclosure of more information about abandoned oil wells vis-a-vis [SB 551](#), [further lobbying](#) against [legislation](#) calling for more transparency in the funding behind political mailers.

2.) [Michael Mische](#)

A Professor of Management and Organization at USC's Marshall School of Business, Mische also works as Chairman of the Board and former CEO of the company Synergy Consulting Group, Inc., formerly known as Synergy Global Advisors, according to his [CV](#) and LinkedIn [profile](#).

Mische has already written an article denouncing Governor Newsom's proposal to collect upon windfall earnings coming from price gouging in 2022, titling it "[The Fiction, Fallacy, Fact & Realities of California's Profit Gouging Tax](#)." He has also written a recent paper titled, "[When It](#)

[Comes to Energy. The Stupidity of The Biden Administration Knows No End](#)” and a few months ago wrote another [paper](#) opposing Biden implementing a windfall profits cap on excess oil price-related profits.

Among his clients on his CV, Mische lists the Saudi Arabian petrostate government.

As such, Mische discloses that he is the Lead Advisor in developing the country's "Innovation Super Highway" policy program spearheaded by Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as well as serving as a Senior Advisor to the Saudi Public Investment Fund. Saudi Arabia, on [multiple instances](#) throughout the past decade, has been linked to geopolitically targeted volatility in global oil commodity pricing.

Though he has opined heavily on oil prices of late, Mische has almost no career track record beforehand nor expertise on energy commodities pricing.

3.) [David “Dave” Hackett](#)

Hackett, the former Supply Operations Manager for Mobil prior to the Exxon and Mobil merger, today serves as the Chairman of the Board and until recently served for nearly a quarter century as the President of Stillwater Associates.

The consultancy's [clients](#) include one of the big refiners in PBF Energy. Other clients include Aera Energy, Koch Refining, Lyondell, Tesoro, Sunoco, Shell, ExxonMobil, Total, Petrobras, the American Petroleum Institute, California Independent Oil Marketers Association, Western States Petroleum Association, Oxbow Carbon (owned by William Koch), Koch Petroleum, and the oil commodities trading companies Trafigura and Vitol.

Hackett donated \$100 toward Brian Dahle's bid for Governor and another \$100 to Larry Elder's 2021 campaign.

Beyond Hackett, [Michael Leister](#) — Senior Associate at Stillwater — “spent more than 35 years with Marathon Oil Company and then Marathon Petroleum Company,” according to his firm biography. [John G. Wolff](#) — another Stillwater Senior Associate — formerly “worked for Chevron’s midstream natural gas group where he evaluated issues affecting LNG project developments and natural gas markets until he retired in 2018.”

4.) [James “Jim” Sweeney](#)

Sweeney, an energy economics professor at Stanford, has previously [received industry money](#) for his work as he “periodically serves as a consultant or advisor to Exxon Corporation, ARCO, [and] the American Petroleum Institute,” according to an old version of his university biography pointed to by the watchdog group *Media Matters*.

At Stanford, he [serves as](#) Senior Fellow of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace; Senior Fellow of the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies; Senior Fellow at the Doerr School of Sustainability; and Senior Fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. He also serves as an [expert](#) witness on behalf of the firm Cornerstone Research.

In the past, Cornerstone has [represented](#) Chevron in a federal court case in Hawaii, *Anzai v. Chevron*, which centered upon filing a lawsuit against Chevron and other companies for allegedly conspiring to fix the price of gasoline. The consultancy also [represented](#) ExxonMobil in one of the "ExxonKnew" climate denial market fraud cases, *New York v. ExxonMobil*.

In his own Cornerstone expert testimony experience, Sweeney has also worked for Chevron and Phillips 66, according to a disclosure he made within testimony he submitted in working on behalf of the Trump Administration in [representing](#) it against the climate youth plaintiffs in their landmark federal lawsuit efforts.

Sweeney, who helped Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger write his energy plan, was also an unapologetic proponent of electricity sector deregulation. "The problem was not too little regulation, but too much," [he said in 2003](#) of the policy.

"Sweeney helped write the new governor's energy plan, which includes provisions to streamline bureaucracies, encourage private investment and perhaps most controversially, to make it easier for utilities to pass along changes in wholesale electricity prices to consumers," a 2003 [press account](#) further explains.

In 2002, of Enron – a company [central to California's energy crisis](#) during that era – [he said](#): "No strategy of Enron's...could cause the California electricity crisis, nor even significantly increase the overall price level."

Formerly known as the Precourt Institute for Energy, the Doerr School of Sustainability receives [funding](#) from those such as Aramco, ConocoPhillips, Petrobras, Chevron, Aera Energy, ExxonMobil, Shell, BP, Repsol, ConocoPhillips, PetroChina, Total, Halliburton, Phillips 66, Schlumberger, and more. The [Hoover Institution](#), known for its neoconservative foreign policy bent, has also received funding from ExxonMobil and the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation.