

# *The U.S.* **CHAMBER** DOESN'T SPEAK FOR ME

## **What Is the US Chamber?**

Based in Washington, DC, the US Chamber of Commerce states it is “the world’s largest business federation” and as “the voice of business, the Chamber’s core purpose is to fight for free enterprise before Congress, the White House, regulatory agencies, the courts, the court of public opinion, and governments around the world.”<sup>1</sup> However, the US Chamber “has vastly overstated its size in recent years, helping to make its controversial positions on health care and climate change look like a consensus of American businesses.” It says it speaks for 3 million businesses, when in reality the number is closer to 300,000.<sup>2</sup> Out of the 118 board members, at least 49 represent companies tied to fossil fuel use: oil, gas and coal, and related companies.<sup>3</sup> For hundreds of thousands of companies across the country, the Chamber’s ‘business as usual’ approach fails to understand that a just and sustainable economy is good for business and good for America.

## **What’s So Bad About the US Chamber?**

Throughout its history, the Chamber has taken an anti-environmental stance, fighting to weaken clean air standards, opposing a hazardous waste dumping ban, working to diminish the EPA’s authority to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and lobbying against any national action on climate change.

- Leading up to the 2010 mid-term elections, the Chamber pledged more than \$75 million for campaign ads, with 93% of that cash going to far-right conservatives who are ardent climate deniers.<sup>6</sup>
- The Chamber opposes regulation of greenhouse pollution. In 2009, it spent more than \$144 million lobbying congress, and about \$50 million of that went to opposing a federal climate bill.<sup>4,5,9</sup>
- The Chamber opposes a national clean energy standard for electricity, calling it “wholly unrealistic.”<sup>10</sup>
- It sued to reverse the EPA’s scientific finding that greenhouse pollution threatens public health.<sup>11</sup>
- The Chamber called for a Scopes monkey trial on the science of climate change.<sup>12</sup>

The US Chamber stifles innovation in favor of the “business as usual” practices that sustain their wealthiest members; for example, 12 local and regional chambers joined together to create the group *Chambers for Innovation and Clean Energy*. Shortly after, a U.S. Chamber board member claimed they were trying to “undermine the U.S. Chamber’s and the business community’s leadership on” climate issues.<sup>7</sup>

**“Apple supports regulating greenhouse gas emissions, and it’s frustrating to find the Chamber at odds with us in that effort.”**  
-Steve Jobs  
CEO of Apple Inc.

**“The US Chamber of Commerce doesn’t speak for me because I believe in responsible business doing good for society.”**  
-Benjy Adler, Owner of The Skinny Pancake, Burlington VT



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## Why Should You Care?

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce doesn't act in the best interest of your small business.

- With the majority of its board and funding coming from multi-million dollar corporations, the interests of America's small businesses and real entrepreneurs are ignored during the Chamber's lobbying and political campaigning.
- Though the Chamber claims 96% of its members are small businesses, its self-selected board demonstrates otherwise. Only 6 people represent small businesses, 1 is from a local chamber, while a whopping 111 represent large corporations.<sup>1</sup>
- In a tax document that was recently uncovered, it became clear that in 2009, the U.S. Chamber received 55% of its money from only 16 donors — one massive \$86.2m donation from a group of 5 major health insurance companies.<sup>8</sup>
- The Chamber is clearly not the vehicle to bring about a 21<sup>st</sup> century sustainable economy. This is an economy that embraces clean energy, domestic manufacturing, skilled good jobs, smart growth, high-speed rail, community reinvestments, meaningful consumer and commercial financial regulations and environmental safeguards.

## What Can You Do?

1. Sign on to our nationwide declaration that “The U.S. Chamber Doesn't Speak for Me” and put a window sign on your store front.
2. Recruit five other local business owners to declare “The U.S. Chamber Doesn't Speak for Me.”
3. Ask your local and state chambers of commerce if they still have ties to the U.S. Chamber, and if so to consider ending them.
4. Have your business become part of the national movement to build a more sustainable economy by becoming involved with groups like the American Sustainable Business Council. [www.asbcouncil.org](http://www.asbcouncil.org)

**For additional information about this campaign, visit <http://chamber.350.org>.**



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<sup>1</sup> US Chamber of Commerce website

<sup>2</sup> US Chamber of Commerce May Be Inflating Membership Numbers, *Huffington Post*, March 18 2010

<sup>3</sup> Inside the Chamber of Carbon, *Mother Jones*, October 7 2009

<sup>4</sup> Anti-regulation U.S. Chamber of Commerce pouring record sums into lobbying, *Colorado Independent*, January 28 2011

<sup>5</sup> The Climate Lobby's Non-Stop Growth, *The Center for Public Integrity*, May 20 2009

<sup>6</sup> Who's To Blame For Blocking Progress, *Rolling Stone Magazine*, January 19 2011

<sup>7</sup> Chamber of Commerce is Being Ripped Apart by Climate Change, *Examiner*, August 3 2010

<sup>8</sup> Beyond the \$86 Million Buyout: What Else We Found in the Chamber's 990s, *U.S. Chamber Watch*, November 7 2010

<sup>9</sup> Industrial Polluters Push Approps Committees To Kill Climate Rules, *The Wonk Room*, September 14 2010

<sup>10</sup> In Profound Denial, Chamber of Commerce Lectures On 'Energy Reality,' *The Wonk Room*, January 28 2011

<sup>11</sup> Senators Negotiate Green Economy Bill With Polluters Who Deny Threat of Global Warming, *The Wonk Room*, March 11 2010

<sup>12</sup> The 'Voice of Business' Calls For 'Scopes Monkey Trial' On Science of Climate Change, *The Wonk Room*, August 25 2009