



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SB 432 – Attorney General Actions and Climate Crimes Accountability Fund
(Climate Crimes Accountability Act)**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, Members of Judicial Proceedings:

Under the Maryland Constitution, the Maryland Attorney General has enumerated responsibilities, including investigating, commencing, prosecuting or defending cases as specified by the General Assembly or that the Governor directs to be undertaken. Over time, this body has granted additional authority:

- In 2017, MGA passed the [Maryland Defense Act \(HB 913 / Ch. 26\)](#) “Authorizing the Attorney General to employ specified assistant counsel; authorizing the Attorney General to take specified actions on civil and criminal suits and actions that are based on the federal government's action or inaction that threatens the public interest and welfare of the residents of the State; requiring the Attorney General to provide the Governor with specified notice.
- The Maryland PORT Act ([Chs. 2 and 3 2024](#)) requiring the Attorney General to “pursue all available options, including filing actions against the applicable parties, to recover for the State all possible economic damages arising from the closure of the port and the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge and, beginning July 1, 2024, and each month thereafter until all available options are exhausted or resolved, report to the General Assembly on the status of pursuing and recovering economic damages.”
- [Ch. 97 2025](#) - Support and Protections for Individuals Affected by Federal Actions (Protect Our Federal Workers Act) “the bill authorizes the Attorney General to investigate, commence, and prosecute or defend any civil or criminal suit or action that is based on the federal government’s action or inaction that threatens the public interest and welfare of the residents of the State with respect to protecting State residents who [meet certain points].”

SB 432 would again extend the Attorney General’s authority for much needed protections in Maryland. It would allow the Attorney General to pursue actions against certain fossil fuel entities for tortious or unlawful conduct that has contributed to climate change through fraud, deception, or other action, inaction, or practice.

Since 1968, the coal, oil, and gas industry knew their actions would have devastating impacts on the planet.¹ The Stanford Research Institute presented a report to the American Petroleum

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/apr/13/climate-change-oil-industry-environment-warning-1968>

Institute, warning API that “the release of carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels could carry an array of harmful consequences for the planet.

Significant temperature changes are almost certain to occur by the year 2000 and these could bring about climatic change,” the 1968 Stanford report, found and republished by the Center for International Environmental Law, states. “If the Earth’s temperature increases significantly, a number of events might be expected to occur including the melting of the Antarctic ice cap, a rise in sea levels, warming of the oceans and an increase in photosynthesis....[T]here seems to be no doubt that the potential damage to our environment could be severe.”

In 1981, Exxon Mobil’s in-house climate expert warned the company of the connection between fossil fuels and climate change. Yet Exxon Mobil spent \$30 million over the next 27 years on thinktanks and researchers that promoted climate change denial.²

If the American Petroleum Institute and/or Exxon Mobil had shared this information with the public and began transitioning to clean air initiatives, taxpayers would not be paying the consequences of their lies today.

Maryland taxpayers are now saddled with increased costs, in the State budget, County budgets, and out of our own pockets. According to the Comptroller:

- “A conservative cost estimate of what it will take to safeguard businesses, homes, roads, and entire communities in Maryland from chronic flooding alone (not including other climate hazards) by 2040 under a moderate sea-level-rise scenario is \$27.4 billion.”
- “Maryland experienced 85 extreme weather events between 1980 and 2024. According to the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, the total recovery costs for Maryland were between \$10 billion to \$20 billion dollars.”
- “To fully account for the true cost of climate change, it is crucial to consider not only the immediate impacts, such as disaster cleanup from extreme weather, but also the broader, compounding economic pressures it creates. Climate-related hazards drive up costs of materials, strain public health systems, deplete natural resources, inflate housing prices, and trigger insurance spikes — all of which pose significant obstacles to economic growth. Over time, the failure to invest in climate resilience and mitigation amplifies these financial burdens. While the state has yet to quantify the price of inaction, the following are key factors driving up costs as climate risks escalate.” These include:
 - Workforce disruption, agricultural losses, tourism decline, supply chain disruption, infrastructure damage, heat-related illnesses, power outages, flood and waterborne illnesses, rising repair costs, replacement costs, home loss, forest decline, wetland loss, freshwater fishery declines, marine fisher declines, etc.³

² <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jul/08/exxon-climate-change-1981-climate-denier-funding>

³ <https://www.marylandcomptroller.gov/content/dam/mdcomp/md/reports/research/state-spending-series-climate-change-costs-april-2025.pdf>

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We the taxpayers should not have to bear the burden of paying for these costs, which will only increase as the global temperature rises. Just as the tobacco companies and opioid manufacturers have had to bear responsibility for their deception and actions, so too should the fossil fuel companies. Maryland's Attorney General must have the authority to hold these polluters responsible for their actions and make them pay their fair share so that taxpayers do not.

I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 432.