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October 20, 2015

The Honorable Loretta Lynch
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Loretta Lynch:

I am writing concerning a potential instance of corporate fraud – behavior that may ultimately qualify as a violation of federal law. I respectfully request the Department investigate these allegations, and take appropriate action if the investigation yields evidence of wrongdoing.

According to an eight-month investigation by journalists at *Inside Climate News*, Exxon – now ExxonMobil – may have conducted extensive research on climate change as early as 1977. As a result, it appears that top Exxon scientists concluded both that climate change is real and that it was caused in part by the carbon pollution resulting from use of Exxon's petroleum-based products. In addition, the purported internal business memoranda accompanying the news report asserted that Exxon's so-called "climate research program" was launched in response to a perceived existential threat to its business model.

In 1998, the *New York Times* reported that Exxon participated in the American Petroleum Institute's Global Climate Science Communications Plan, an effort aimed at stressing "uncertainty" on climate science. Exxon has since contributed more than \$31 million since 1998 to think tanks and organizations that cast doubt on mainstream climate science.

These reports, if true, raise serious allegations of a misinformation campaign that may have caused public harm similar to the tobacco industry's actions – conduct that led to federal racketeering convictions. Based on available public information, it appears that Exxon knew its product was causing harm to the public, and spent millions of dollars to obfuscate the facts in the public discourse. The information that has come to light about Exxon's past activities raises potentially serious concerns that should be investigated.

I am heartened that, according to your September 9, 2015, memorandum “[f]ighting corporate fraud and other misconduct is a top priority of the Department of Justice.” I request that the Department form a taskforce by December 19, 2015, to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to launch an official inquiry against any actors and entities involved. I look forward to hearing the Department’s recommendations in a timely manner.

Thank you for your time and close consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bernard Sanders". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bernard" and last name "Sanders" clearly distinguishable.

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator