The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday cleared the way for the attorney general of Massachusetts to obtain records from Exxon Mobil Corp (XOM.N) to probe whether the oil company for decades concealed its knowledge of the role fossil fuels play in climate change.

The justices declined to hear Exxon’s appeal of a ruling by the top court in Massachusetts holding that Attorney General Maura Healey, a Democrat, had jurisdiction to seek records to probe whether the company misled consumers and investors.

The action by the high court marked the latest setback for Exxon in its efforts to halt the Massachusetts investigation and a similar one by New York’s attorney general, who in October filed a lawsuit against the company.

New York’s lawsuit accused Exxon of engaging in a systematic scheme to deceive investors about the impact that future climate change regulations could have on its business. Exxon has called the claims “meritless.”
The Massachusetts and New York investigations were launched following 2015 news reports that Exxon’s own scientists had determined that fossil fuel combustion must be reduced to mitigate the impact of climate change.

Those news reports, by InsideClimate News and the Los Angeles Times, were based on documents from the 1970s and 1980s. Exxon said the documents were not inconsistent with its public positions.

(Reporting by Nate Raymond and Lawrence Hurley; Editing by Will Dunham)

**CaliforniaGeo Responds—**

Time will tell whether these two states’ AG’s will be able to prove Exxon culpability by their alleged deception. This would not just be an informational denial to the wider scientific community and general public, but one in which this company’s business model would be leveraged against that disclosure, specifically in its financial self-interest.

This case may turn out to resemble the decades-long actions of U.S. tobacco corporations that hid their own scientifically derived evidence that smoking was indeed harmful to health. In spite of this information being withheld from the public, the companies continued to fight government attempts to regulate nicotine. They also continued significant marketing to the nation’s youth in order to replace the over 400,000 deaths each year from smoking. The federal government still pays subsidies to tobacco farmers.

Exxon is the company whose troubled captain, Joseph Hazelwood, put the Exxon Valdez on Bligh reef in Prince William Sound in Alaska. It required public outrage and the cost of that 11 million gallon spill to get new tankers built with double hulls. At the time, Hazelwood was a three time DUI driver with a suspended license in his home state.

One industry benefits by killing its own consumers and the other threatens a slower (but increasingly certain) death by the force of climate change. But not until rising sea levels, more extreme weather, failed crops, and epic climate-based migration brings staggering costs.

![Cumulative Historical Federal Subsidies](image-url)