

COUNCIL DOCUMENT #35
Assigned by Council Resolutions
Committee ILB 11/28/13

Resolution on Divestment of Holdings in Fossil Fuel Companies

- Whereas in light of alarming evidence of the impact CO₂ emissions are having right now on climate change, and the fact that fossil fuel corporations claim to have 2,795 gigatons of CO₂ in their reserves (five times amount that can be burned to stay below a 2°C increase in global temperature that the international community agrees is the upper limit most life forms can tolerate) the organization 350.org has launched a fossil fuel divestment campaign, supported by individuals such as Bishop Desmond Tutu, who calls action on climate change the moral issue of our times;
- Whereas in the 1980s the American Library Association joined in the divestment campaign against South African apartheid as a tool for non-violent political change;
- Whereas floods, fires, droughts and storms connected to climate change and costing billions of dollars in damages have prompted organizations representing some institutional investors to call on governments to develop workable frameworks that will reduce climate risk and support low carbon investment;
- Whereas around the globe libraries and their communities are already experiencing the negative social and economic impact of climate change, like those our own libraries suffered from hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, and devastating tornados such as those in Joplin Missouri;
- Whereas increasing numbers of people are joining 350.org's call to divest holdings in fossil fuel companies such as the major of Seattle who recently called on the city retirement board to divest, and college students across the country who are demanding that their institutions of higher learning divest their holdings in fossil fuel industries;
- Whereas ALA's Strategic Plan 2011-2015 states that: "Libraries are widely recognized as key players in economic development, including strong and vibrant communities, and in sustaining a strong democracy"; and

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Whereas ALA recognizes the role its financial investments can play in meeting the social responsibilities of the Association/ now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association:

1. goes on record to publicly recognize that human generation of CO₂ is resulting in global climate change;
2. directs its endowment trustees to divest all holdings in the fossil fuel industry and invest in renewable energy initiatives;
3. renews relations with the Book Industry Environmental Council, the Green Press Initiative, and other partners in the publishing and information technology industries to explore how we can help our communities and nation transition away from a fossil fueled economy;
4. calls on President Obama to hold a White House Conference on Climate Change which libraries will assist in launching with a series of library-based local, state, regional, national, and international community conversations focused on planning and implementing a peaceful transition to a post-fossil-free fuel, sustainable human relationship with the planet; and
5. amend ALA Policy B.5.5 to state that libraries are urged, in addition to the collection and provision of information regarding the environment, to take steps in assisting communities transition to fossil-free, renewable, sustainable energy sources.

Moved by Ben Trapskin, ALA Council-at-Large, 612-237-0980

Seconded by Ann Crewdsen, ALA Councilor-at-Large, 425-891-1802

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1. Title of Resolution: RESOLUTION ON DIVESTMENT OF HOLDING IN FOSSIL FUEL COMPANIES
2. ALA Units and/or Committee Consulted (if any): SRRT, REFORMA, Youth Council Caucus, & Council Forum
3. Endorsements by ALA Units and/or Committee (if any): ???
4. Fiscal implications: BARC to be consulted.
5. List all parties to whom resolution should be sent: BARC
6. Impact on ALA Policies and Positions: This resolution is tied directly to the ALA Strategic Plan 2011-2015 that states: Libraries are widely recognized as key players in economic development, in building strong and vibrant communities, and in sustaining a strong democracy.
 - 6a) ALA general policy or viewpoint: ALA recognizes the role its financial investment can play in meeting the social responsibilities of the Association
 - 6b) Change in existing policy: Amendment to ALA Policy B.5.5.
 - 6c) New policy: N/A
 - 6d) Policy Conflicts: N/A
7. Initiating Committee or Unit (if any): SRRT

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8. Pertinent Background Information:

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- "Top 200 Fossil Fuel Companies," *gofossilfree.org*. Web. n.d. Accessed 23 December 2012. <http://gofossilfree.org/companies/>
- "SEATTLE: AN UPDATE ON FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT." *States News Service* 21 Dec. 2012. *General OneFile*. Web. 31 Dec. 2012. <http://mayormcginn.seattle.gov/an-update-on-fossil-fuel-divestment/>