ESG Investments: Prudent or Perilously Political?

Free-market solutions to 'woke' investment onslaught

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ESG activism threatens our freedom

By Governor Ron DeSantis

The following are excerpts from a speech by Gov. DeSantis in Naples, Florida, on February 13, 2023.

"[We are] tackling this issue of ESG [because] elites grab it and they really want to impose it on the rest of us. It's devolved into a mechanism to inject political ideology into investment decisions, corporate governance, and really the everyday economy.

That is not, ultimately, something that is going to work out well for us here in Florida or in the United States of America. There's not a real groundswell for this from amongst the average citizen.

One of their big targets is domestic energy production [because] they do not want us to be energy independent. It's bad policy [that] not only affects your bottom line in terms of the energy that you have to consume to go to work, to live and to do the basic things we all do, businesses to operate, but also it affects our national security. [ESG] helps China.

It also violates the fiduciary duty that executives have to the shareholders of the publicly traded companies. Your pension money, your retirement money is likely invested in some of these funds, and those funds should be used to try to produce the best result for you using the available investment options.

They're using people's pension money and 401K money effectively to advance a political agenda. And that is not an appropriate use of corporate power.

In Florida, one of our home-based companies is a private corrections company called the Geo Group. One of the main things [is to] provide services to the federal government in ICE to be able to detain illegal aliens who are coming across the southern border. A few years ago, Geo Group was debanked by the major financial institutions in this country because they were basically trying to pursue a policy of de facto abolishing ICE and expressing support for open borders. So this was a company that was contracting with the federal government, and you had the banks cut them off and they have to try to find funding elsewhere.

That is using your economic power to advance a political agenda. I think having a politicized economy raises the idea of who governs our society. Our constitution says we, the people, govern through elections and different houses of the legislature, executive [to] arrive at policy.

People can evaluate, they can choose other people in future elections. ESG asset managers, these international folks, and big Wall Street banks don't have to worry about winning an election. [They] want to do an end run around [because] a lot of the policies they pursue could never win favor with the American public.

I think, ultimately, it represents a threat, not just to a smooth, functioning, prosperous economy, but also our very freedom itself.

Last year we acted by prohibiting using ESG in the investments decisions for our state pension program. We're going to build off that success with a number of proposals that we'll look to get through the legislative session. So first, we're going to put what we already did into statute so that our investment decisions with the money of firefighters, cops, teachers, other people that have worked in state and local government and have qualified for pensions here in the State of Florida, that those decisions are being made and what the best interests of the pensioners are, or the beneficiaries not based on political considerations. We are also going to enact protections for Floridians against discrimination by big banks and large financial institutions for their religious, political, or social beliefs.

We are also going to, in the State of Florida, prohibit these same institutions from using so-called social credit scores in making banking and lending decisions. It's a way to try to impose politics on what should just be economic decisions. We're making sure to protect this as a sphere of economic decision-making, not political activism.

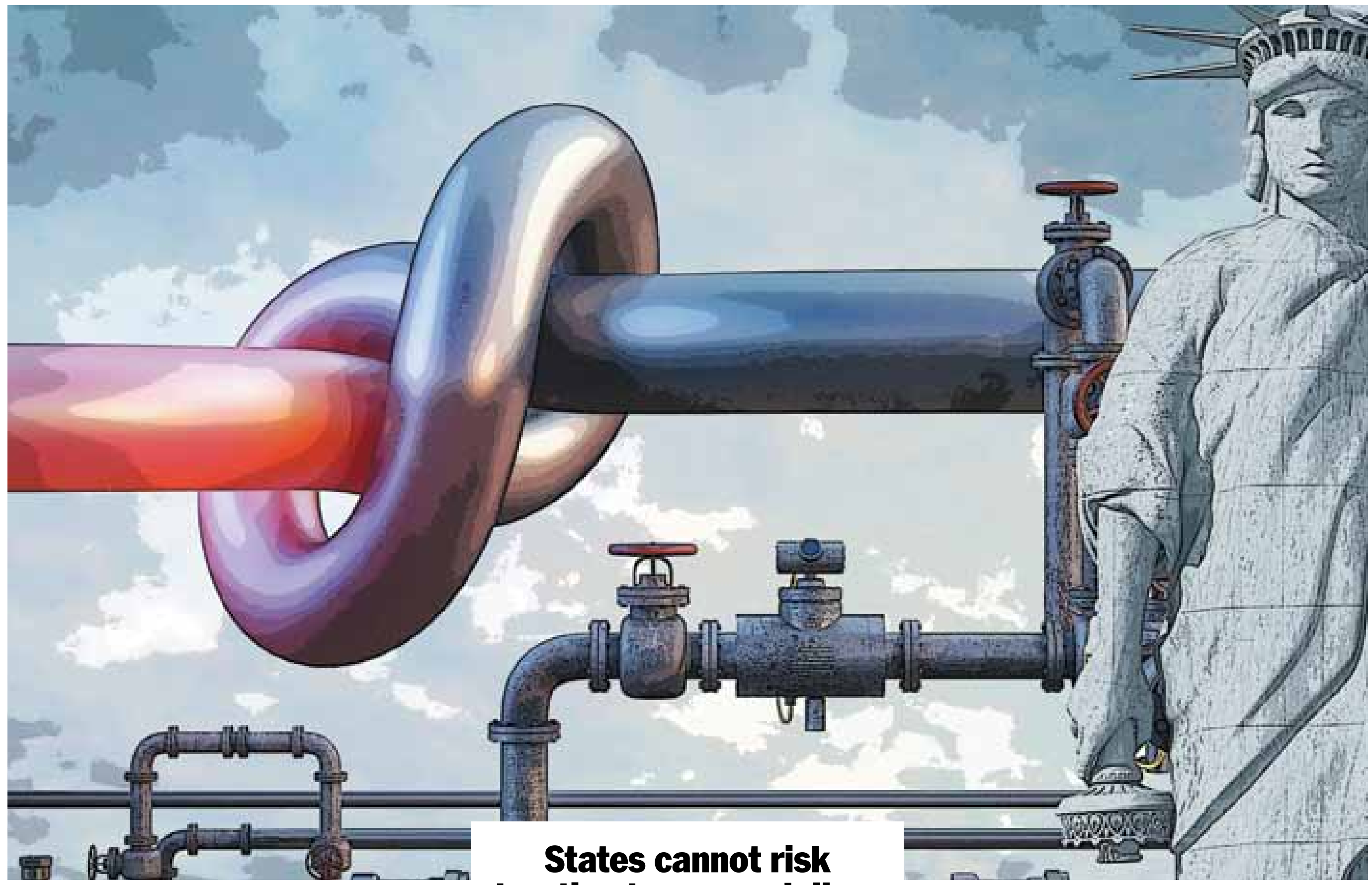
We've got a massive budget surplus in Florida. None of those deposits will be permitted to be made in institutions that are pursuing this woke ESG agenda.

And finally, we're also going to make sure that ESG is not infecting other decisions at either the state and local government: no investment decisions at the state or local government with ESG, no use of ESG in procurement and in contracting, and no use of ESG when issuing local or state bonds.

This is an elite-driven phenomenon [that] they don't really have the persuasive ability to get this done through the democratic process. We will stand up for folks in places like Daytona and Destin, and we will not be following the elites in places like Davos. Freedom [means] freedom to live your life free from this agenda being jammed down your throat, free for you to think for yourselves and to make your own decisions."

Governor Ron DeSantis is the 46th governor of Florida. Prior to winning two statewide elections, he served as the U.S. Representative for Florida's Sixth District. Before public service, he worked his way through Yale University, where he graduated with honors and was the captain of the varsity baseball team. He graduated with honors from Harvard Law School. While at Harvard, he earned a commission in the U.S. Navy as a JAG officer. His military decorations include the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service and the Iraq Campaign Medal. After active-duty service, he served as a federal prosecutor and still serves in the U.S. Navy Reserve. These excerpts come from remarks made by the governor at a press conference in Naples, Florida, on February 13, 2023. Those interested in listening to the governor's full remarks can do so on the governor's online video catalogue at rumble.com/v29dcgc-gov.-desantis-proposal-to-end-esg-woke-banking.html.

Busting the ESG trust



By U.S. Sen. Tom Cotton

Many of America's most powerful companies have combined to pursue a dangerous political agenda masquerading as altruism. This agenda, known as Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investing, hurts shareholders, undermines workers, and sabotages American energy independence. It's also illegal.

Since the passage of the 1890 Sherman Antitrust Act, any "contract," "combination," or "conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce" has been illegal. Yet, ESG proponents have openly conspired and combined to restrain trade and commerce.

The key to their illegal behavior can be found in the "E" in ESG, which requires firms to shun investment in fossil fuel ventures. ESG-compliant financial firms control over $60 trillion and, while nominally competing, they conspire to constrict the flow of investment into a particular sector of the economy. In so doing, these firms are suppressing competition between one another and restraining the commerce and trade of oil, gas, and coal companies.

The ESG firms participating in Climate Action 100+ are perhaps the most blatant violators of our antitrust laws. Climate Action 100+ is an elite group of the most powerful ESG investors in America, including competitors BlackRock and JP Morgan. This cartel of competing investment firms actively targets less powerful companies and coerces them into lowering their carbon footprint. Adding a new dimension to their criminality, Climate Action 100+ firms often communicate with multiple competing companies at the same time. This may constitute what is called a "spoke and hub conspiracy." Though President Biden's FTC Chair and Assistant Attorney General for the Antitrust Division have both acknowledged that these companies may be violating antitrust laws, the Biden administration supports corporate criminals like they support our nation's drug dealers: through inaction.

Thankfully, Republican state attorneys general have stepped up where Biden stands down. Many have begun investigating ESG companies for antitrust violations and informing the public of the dangers of ESG. Former Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich went so far as to say that Climate Action 100+ may be "the biggest antitrust violation in history." In response to these investigations, some of our nation's largest law firms, including Latham & Watkins, Baker McKenzie, and Hogan Lovells have begun warning their clients of the antitrust risks posed by the ESG movement. ESG companies should know that Republicans at all levels will investigate these antitrust violations, including when we take back the White House in 2024.

ESG exposes investors not only to legal dangers, but also to significant financial losses. Last year, energy was the only sector in the Standard and Poor's 500 stock index to rise, yet ESG-aligned funds do not invest in fossil-fuel companies by design. Unsurprisingly, ESG funds underperformed the S&P 500 last year.

Republican states have rightly begun divesting retirement and pension funds from ESG-compliant firms like BlackRock, costing those firms billions of dollars. Inescapably, this divestment will lead to further losses for shareholders in ESG companies. States cannot risk trusting taxpayer dollars to companies exposed to antitrust lawsuits, nor can they allow state-backed retirement and pension funds to be used for woke nonsense that risks the continued health of those funds. It's up to CEOs to put their shareholders first by ending their affiliation with ESG. Until then, Republicans can, will, and should continue divesting from these firms.

States cannot risk trusting taxpayer dollars to companies exposed to antitrust lawsuits, nor can they allow state-backed retirement and pension funds to be used for woke nonsense that risks the continued health of those funds.

Finally, EGS is simply bad for working Americans. Underperforming ESG-compliant companies and under-invested fossil fuel companies alike are forced to lay off workers or scale back planned hiring because of ESG. Similarly, companies are forced to slow or freeze wage increases, hurting employed workers.

The ESG crusade is also raising the price of energy for all Americans. Partly as a result of ESG mandates, the United States now produces 600,000 fewer barrels of oil per day than at our pre-pandemic peak, despite rising demand and oil prices hovering near historical highs. We should be enjoying an American energy renaissance, but instead we are still struggling to recovering from economic losses inflicted by the pandemic and inflationary pressures inflicted by Joe Biden and the Democrats. ESG is making recovery much harder.

Adam Smith once wrote that "people of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the publick, or in some contrivance." This is certainly true of ESG investors. It's the responsibility of lawmakers to protect their constituents. The federal government must fully enforce our nation's antitrust laws and make it clear to companies and investors that they are at risk of major losses if they sign up for the ESG agenda.

Investors beware.

Senator Tom Cotton, Arkansas Republican, serves on the Judiciary Committee as the Ranking Member for the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice and Counterterrorism, the Intelligence Committee, and the Armed Services Committee, where he serves as the Ranking Member of the Air Land Power Subcommittee. A graduate of Harvard Law School and former clerk with the U.S. Court of Appeals, he left the law to serve in the United States Army as an Infantry Officer on two combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. His military decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Combat Infantry Badge, and Ranger Tab.

Voice of experience: Retirement plans need profits, not politics

By U.S. Sen. Cynthia Lummis

Before I came to Washington, D.C., I served two terms as the state treasurer of Wyoming. I managed billions of dollars in assets and transitioned the state's investments from mostly fixed-income funds to a diversified portfolio that grew to more than $8.5 billion. This helped create a buffer to the boom-and-bust cycle of Wyoming's energy industry. When I invested Wyoming's funds, I looked at outcomes and returns, not a company's politics du jour. People across Wyoming do the same. However, there is a small, yet vocal, movement attempting to influence investment rules and pressure investors and financial advisors to make investments based on a company's environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) factors.

It astounds me that anyone would make an investment based on political priorities instead of sound financial information and return on investment, but that is where we are today unfortunately. I, however, am not interested in letting the financial well-being of people in Wyoming be hijacked by woke politics.

It is widely known that ESG funds tend to have lower rates of return, yet these massive fund management companies are choosing to put their own politics over the success of retirement portfolios for people across Wyoming. This is unacceptable. It is also unacceptable that the Biden administration is not only allowing this but encouraging it!

At the end of November 2022, the Biden administration released a rule that explicitly allows managers of retirement plans to consider ESG factors when selecting investments and exercising shareholder rights. Prior to this rule, financial advisors and fund managers were required to make decisions solely based on the best interests of their investors.

People in Wyoming want their retirement plans to prioritize the best investments possible. The Biden administration's attempt to politicize their retirement funds is short-sighted and will result in less money to rely on when they are ready to retire.

I joined Senator Mike Braun (R-IN) along with the rest of my Senate Republican colleagues in introducing a Congressional Review Act (CRA) resolution of disapproval of this rule to signal to President Biden that this rule is harmful to the American people.

In the last Congress, I joined Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK) to introduce the INDEX Act which would deconsolidate the voting power of these large investment management funds that choose to put politics over investment returns. People across Wyoming have invested their hard-earned dollars in major companies across the U.S., yet their voices are being co-opted by fund managers with a partisan agenda.

Ultimately, these efforts by the Biden administration and woke fund managers are an attempt to quietly subvert the industries they find to be reprehensible – our domestic energy industry and the firearms industry are at the top of their list.

Progressive fund managers would prefer traditional energy sources – coal, oil and natural gas – not exist anymore, and they believe they hold the keys. If they route the assets of unassuming Americans away from these industries, they can try to starve them out. This is unacceptable and short-sighted, and it spells disaster for states like Wyoming that rely on these industries to fund state and local governments. Yet again, the Biden administration is encouraging this! The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has pushed to require businesses to disclose their climate change risk when filling out their required disclosures.

It will cause chaos for retirees when they are left with a diminished account due to poor returns on investment.

The government should not be picking winners and losers, and it certainly should not be encouraging or pressuring fund managers to pursue a woke agenda instead of positive returns for their customers. It will cause chaos for retirees when they are left with a diminished account due to poor returns on investment.

The purpose of government involvement in Americans' retirement accounts is to protect them from bad actors, but now it appears that the bad actors are sitting in the regulators' chairs.

Senator Cynthia Lummis, Wyoming Republican, is the state's first female in the United States Senate. She serves on the Commerce, Science, & Transportation Committee; Environment & Public Works Committee; and Banking, Housing, & Urban Development Committee. Prior to the Senate, she served in the U.S. House, as Wyoming State Treasurer, and 14 years in the State House and Senate. Born on a cattle ranch in Laramie County, she has spent her entire career fighting for Wyoming families, communities, businesses, and values.

The Green New Deal trojan horse: How ESG investing harms average Americans

By U.S. Sen. Eric Schmitt

If we learned anything from COVID-19 tyranny, it's that big government and powerful corporations will stop at nothing to seize power and control over the lives of each and every one of us and how we live our lives. Take the new corporate buzzword and investment strategy, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investing. Sounds harmless on its face, but when we pull the curtain back, in reality, it's just another example of the effort to reorder our lives to fit the agenda of the far left. ESG investing is a trojan horse – for major companies to say they are doing "something" for PR purposes, but is really an attempt to undermine the fundamentals of capitalism and individual liberty.

The tip of the iceberg of the issue is how this type of investing will impact the rates and returns of pensions and the standard of living for millions of Americans. Rather than seeking to deliver the highest return on hard-earned investments, this type of investing is based on "social credit scores." The implications are enormous. Who can banks lend to? Well, certainly not the lifeline of our economy in Missouri. Factories, plants, farmers, ranchers, oil and gas producers, and trucking companies certainly are at risk of securing capital because they don't meet the criteria of being "environmentally responsible." What political donations does a company give? Do they donate to police foundations or Black Lives Matter? What is the real impact of woke investment policies? Less money for you, but also divestment from critical energy and manufacturing industries deemed not "socially responsible enough" by those who have never set foot in a factory or plant, the inability of farmers and ranchers to get loans from local banks afraid to upset the status quo, rising diesel costs for the truckers who transport our food and goods across the country, the jeopardization of years and years of retirement and general savings by frugal Americans, and much, much more. It is simply climate alarmism with teeth.

What's more, ESG is an extension of the ongoing war on the American energy and agriculture industries by the Biden administration and climate activists. Purely determining the profitability of a company based on an arbitrary "social score" is not a sound investment strategy. Divesting from domestic energy producers and outsourcing those critical needs to countries such as Venezuela and Saudi Arabia raises major national security concerns and holds our markets hostage. China is not going to stop building coal-fired power plants and investing in its massive cattle industry, and Saudi Arabia is not going to stop expanding its multibillion-dollar oil operation. ESG is an "out of sight, out of mind" investment strategy, and those that suffer the most are the poor and those who work to quite literally keep the lights on across our country.

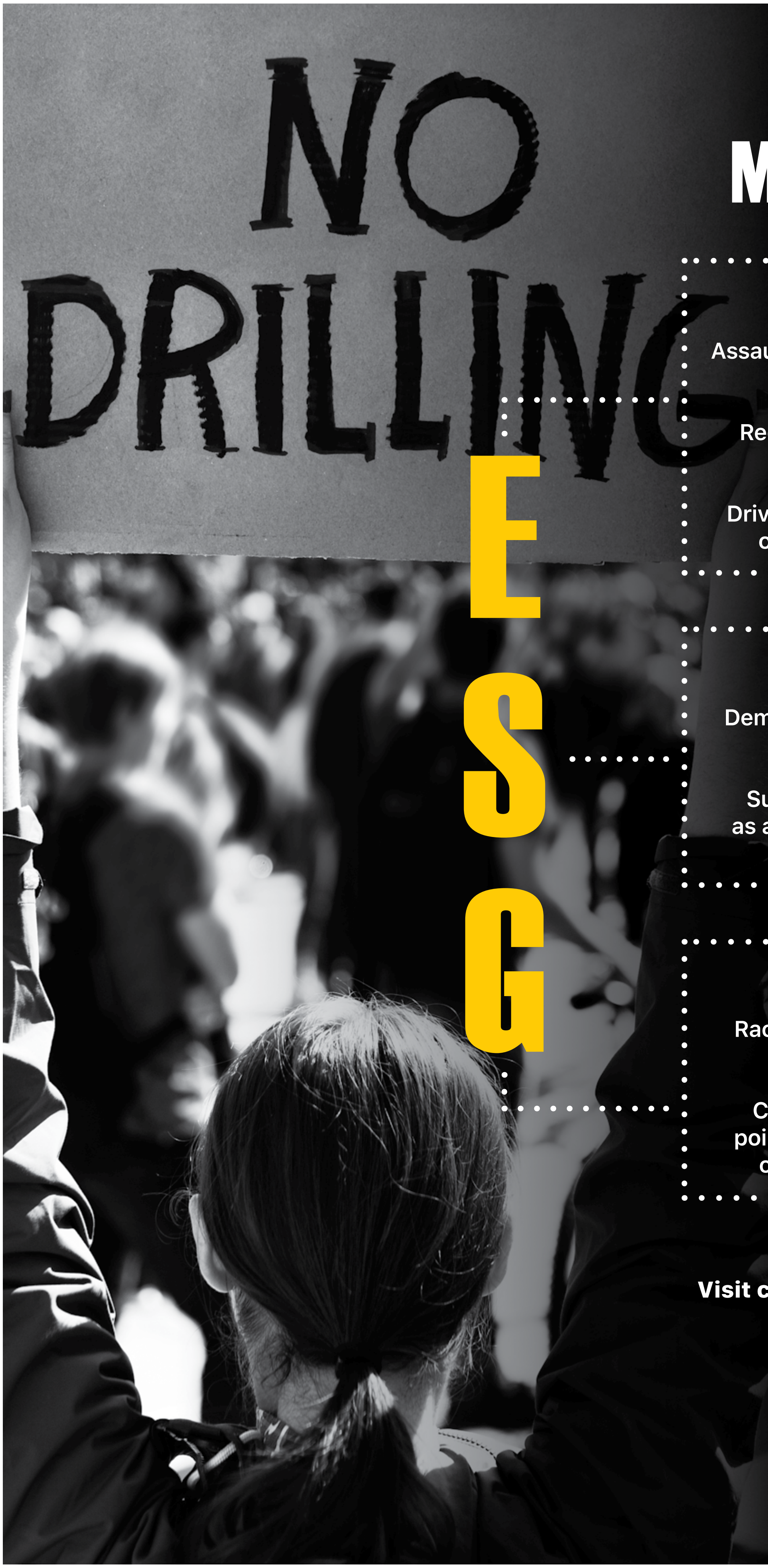
With ESG, the elite and powerful get to tell the rest of us what we can and can't have. The hypocrisy is astounding. According to the loudest proponents of ESG, the entire American coastline could be underwater soon, yet real estate giants and powerful former and current politicians seem to be gobbling up every bit of beachfront property they can find. The Biden administration claims to be doing everything in their power to bring down food and energy prices. Yet divesting from companies who power and feed America without a viable alternative will do the exact opposite and makes zero economic sense when analyzed through the eyes of even the most basic risk analysis investment strategy.

With ESG, the elite and powerful get to tell the rest of us what we can and can't have.

When I was Attorney General of Missouri, we fought to expose ESG investing and investigate companies who abandoned their fiduciary responsibilities in favor of virtue signaling. I led the way in exposing the "Net Zero Banking Alliance," which entails six major investment banks changing investment strategy to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. I fought Blackrock's attempts to shove their ESG agenda down the throats of millions of Americans. Now, as a United States Senator, I'll continue to fight against ESG and the havoc it's wreaking on domestic energy production and the long-term impacts it will have on the savings and financial stability of hard-working Missourians and Americans.

Adopting ESG investing might look nice on the glossy pages of a quarterly or annual report, and it may keep climate activists and investor activists at bay for the time being, but at the end of the day, it severely restricts domestic agriculture and energy production, increases our reliance on foreign energy sources, dings the pocketbooks and wallets of Missourians and Americans who are just trying to get by, and restricts our freedoms by limiting options for every American to make their own decisions. ESG investing is nothing more than a woke trojan horse, and it's time to close the gate and send the elites pushing this out the door.

Senator Eric Schmitt, Missouri Republican, serves on the Commerce and Armed Services Committee as well as Joint Economic Committee. A sixth-generation Missourian, he served as the state's Attorney General, State Treasurer and represented the 15th Senate District in the Missouri General Assembly.



The Real Meaning of ESG

E
S
G

Environmental

Assault on American energy independence, punishes fossil fuel industry

Regulations that benefit China, Russia and other rogue nations

Driving up the cost of gas, groceries and other common goods and services

Social

Demanding corporations put progressive politics over their consumers

Support for progressive causes such as abortions, child sex changes and the indoctrination of our youth

Governance

Racial and gender quotas for corporate boards and workplaces

Calls to replicate China's behavioral points system to ensure companies are obedient to specific political views

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With the U.S. approaching a recession, it's time for the president and his allies to stop their war on affordable energy

By U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz

It's the end of February, one of the coldest months of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. Your house is freezing. You're wrapped up in a blanket, but the cold has settled in your bones. Yes, you could turn on your heater, but you're more afraid of the massive heating bill you would get than another night of the cold.

This is how millions of Americans live through the winter, including the elderly. A recent study found that 16% of American households experience energy poverty—even households that live above the federal poverty line. Energy is getting more and more expensive, inflation is crippling family budgets, and we may be on the brink of a major recession.

The war on affordable, reliable energy must end.

This war is being waged on two fronts—by the Biden administration, doing everything it can to throttle American energy production, and through a liberal elite investment movement called "ESG," which stands for Environmental, Social, Governance principles. In reality these are anti-environmental and socialist governance fantasies.

The ESG movement has co-opted many of the biggest retirement, pension, and investment funds in the United States and around the world. Proponents argue that divesting from corporations that don't meet arbitrary standards will force these businesses to change the way they operate and stop using fossil fuels, thus helping to supposedly protect the environment.

These divestment strategies are not working. Not only has ESG failed to produce the left's desired effect, this strategy is causing real harm in the way of lower returns for investors, including millions of Americans whose retirement savings are being used as ESG pawns.

ESG is not protecting the environment. No country in the world has reduced carbon emissions more than the United States. Since peaking in 2007, carbon and methane emissions have fallen year after year in the United States. We are now at early-1990s emissions levels despite having a larger population thanks to inexpensive, abundant natural gas.

Further, when the oil and gas industry suffers in the United States, it hurts other businesses. For example, every farmer and rancher ends up paying more to get food to market. As such, a war on American energy not only means Americans are paying more to fill up their gas tanks, they are also paying a lot more to put food on the table.

But the harm is also global. When the U.S. produces less fuel, we are not able to export as much energy to our allies, which means foreign countries like Russia, Iran, and Venezuela swoop in and fill the void. Their emissions can be up to six times greater than those in the United States to produce the same amount of energy, which means ESG is actually imposing a negative cost on the environment.

So what can be done about this?

Over the next two years, I will have the privilege of serving as the top Republican on the Senate Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over industries comprising nearly half of the United States economy. My intention as incoming Ranking Member is to be vigorous on oversight and in trying to drive through legislation on issues that matter—including to challenge ESG policies that are hammering jobs, hurting American families, and harming the American energy industry.

The priorities at the heart of ESG are not only unrealistic, they benefit the privileged few at the expense of hard-working Americans. Terrence Keeley, a former executive at BlackRock, the largest investment firm in the world and a huge proponent of ESG, has admitted that ESG is "failing" and "[d]espite tens of trillions of ESG investments, investors haven't done very well nor generated much good."

ESG's attack on affordable, reliable energy is harming the people of Texas, Americans across the country, and our allies abroad. It makes their cost of living soar and empowers tyrannical regimes like China, Iran, and Venezuela.

Americans can't afford this woke war on energy.

Senator Ted Cruz, Texas Republican, is the Ranking Member on the Senate Commerce Committee. He also serves on the Foreign Relations, Judiciary, and Rules & Administration Committees. Prior to the U.S. Senate, he was Texas' Solicitor General during which time he argued nine cases before the Supreme Court.

The Biden administration aims to dictate retirement investments

By U.S. Sen. James Lankford

If you're someone who thinks the progressive movement in our nation is looking to push its agenda in every way, look no further than environmental, social, and governance (known as "ESG") investing. ESG demands that a company or an investment shouldn't be scored on its financial returns or viability but instead on how green or progressive it is according to an ever-changing and loosely defined litmus test of ESG.

Political preferences have taken over your retirement funds.

Basically, left-wing activists can make ESG mean whatever they want to get a company to agree with their radical environmental philosophy, liberal social issues, or their demand to put their left-wing activists on their board—or they're discriminatory. If the company won't capitulate to the left, they get a lower ESG score and public pressure to bend to their will. Unfortunately, most public companies cave to the left.

The Department of Labor recently set an ESG rule that allows retirement plans to use Americans' retirement savings to advance a green-energy and social-justice political agenda. The Biden administration's rule tells the federal government to root out threats from climate-related financial risks and use that information to supposedly protect the life savings and pensions of America's workers and families.

Their political preferences have taken over your retirement funds. Investment companies, including those who choose where to invest Americans' retirement funds, have been encouraged by the far left to steer client investments toward companies that practice social and/or environmental justice rather than toward the best investments, either now or for retirement. Retirement funds used to be about families preparing for the future. Now apparently they're about liberal political preferences.

The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) and the FDIC are on a parallel track to force "climate-related financial risks" on assessing the safety and soundness of financial institutions, and the OCC is creating a Chief Climate Risk Officer. Financial institutions are scrambling with the uncertainty of complying with Biden's climate agenda instead of leaning on traditional sound lending practices. The SEC has released a 490-page climate risk disclosure rule that could impact all facets of the economy, including small agriculture operations in Oklahoma and elsewhere.

Like retirement investment companies, utility companies are forced to capitulate to Green New Deal climate-change activists if they have any hope of staying in the energy market because of ESG. If companies aren't pushing out coal, natural gas, and oil and moving toward renewables, no matter the additional cost to customers, they're being told their days may be numbered. Gun manufacturers and traditional oil and gas companies have already experienced the loss of capital access simply because of their business type.

Oklahomans and others around our nation show their support or dislike of a company, a product, or a social justice movement with their wallets. That is where capitalism shines because individuals have a choice in where they shop, who they support, and which companies align with their values. Those on the left say people demand that companies implement ESG polices, but what they really mean is the media and activists demand those changes. Other people vote with their wallets and time.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) grades its citizens and businesses with a social credit system that determines whether the CCP thinks they're a good citizen/company or not based on factors including whether a person attends government-backed events, etc. The punishment for a low social credit is being banned from flights, blocked from student loans, and restricted or throttled internet use.

The Biden administration's ESG and social justice activists use their bully pulpit to run whole industries out of town. That's why, last year my colleagues and I worked to stop their onerous rule that encourages fiduciaries to support left-leaning social and environmental justice priorities. I directly questioned Energy Secretary Granholm to confront the administration on their energy policies that raise the price of everything, and I introduced the Energy Regulations Certainty Act to help ensure Biden's overreaching climate-change focused regulations don't continue to hinder U.S. energy.

My team and I are watching the social and environmental justice movements within the Biden administration closely to be sure Americans are not the last to know about the left pushing their agenda, rather than protect Americans and their money.

Senator James Lankford, Oklahoma Republican, serves on three committees critical to Oklahomans: Finance; Intelligence; and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. He is the Ranking Member of the Government Operations and Border Management Subcommittee, which covers the federal workforce, regulatory reform, border security, management, and operations.

Rig the tax code for working Americans, not woke companies

By U.S. Rep. Jason Smith

Inflation has robbed Americans' wallets month after month since President Biden took office and launched his partisan spending spree. It has hit seniors particularly hard. Many are choosing to delay retirement and struggling to buy basic necessities on their fixed income. Now, another partisan political agenda threatens to further decimate the retirement security of millions of Americans.

Over the last two years, Democrats have worked tirelessly to enshrine so-called "environmental, social, and governance" (ESG) ambitions into America's financial system. This corporate political crusade threatens the $20 trillion American retirement saving system, which is held in individuals' 401(k)s and other retirement accounts.

By law, managers of these retirement funds are supposed to maximize returns for their investors. Working families need that protection to prevent Wall Street money managers from investing in failing, unprofitable ventures. Workers, seniors, and families count on their employers and money managers to make wise choices with their savings to help them retire in dignity.

This corporate political crusade threatens the $20 trillion American retirement saving system, which is held in individuals' 401(k)s and other retirement accounts.

Unfortunately, the Democrats' ESG agenda would help funnel Americans' retirement savings into politically charged woke investments that put climate alarmism and extreme social policies ahead of supporting the retirement of working-class families.

Take climate, for example, where President Biden has pledged the United States to reduce carbon emissions by 80% by 2030. The International Energy Agency estimates that by 2030, $5 trillion will have to be spent every year for the global economy to produce no emissions – right on track with Democrats' goal. That's every dollar the federal government collected last year being spent on dubious "green" energy programs. Were the radical voices in charge of today's Democrat party merely battling this out in Congress, that would be one thing – at least there's public debate and a vote. But this has turned into a pressure campaign against investment advisors to leverage Americans' retirement accounts into funding extreme ESG climate schemes.

The Trump administration's Department of Labor took steps to protect Americans' retirement savings from the woke ESG interests. The Biden administration reversed course and rolled out the welcome mat for the ESG agenda to control how retirement funds are invested. As a result of the Biden administration stripping away legal protections for seniors and savers, Americans are at risk for lower financial returns and less retirement security.

Investing in ESG has shown to be a financial loser. In 2022, the top three publicly traded ESG funds performed 5.2% worse than the S&P 500 as a whole. When retirement accounts have lost nearly 25% since Biden became president, seniors cannot leave money on the table for the sake of Democrats' woke ideology. Thanks to the pressure applied by state governments standing up for their citizens, net inflows into ESG funds fell by 76% last year.

Some are even using ESG language to mask their fraudulent schemes. Sam Bankman-Fried, a CEO who was recently arrested for securities fraud and money laundering, used buzzwords like "effective altruism" to get Democrat-controlled Washington to look favorably on his company and ignore the warning signs. The result was a company that fell into bankruptcy and innocent investors who were scammed out of billions of dollars. The word "clean" is a major part of the ESG vocabulary, but it's often used to cover up a dirty reality beneath the surface.

What's more, Democrats and Wall Street money managers are teaming up to create an ESG economy paid for by American taxpayers. During the Biden administration, taxpayers have been forced to pay the tab for the massive green corporate welfare agenda that includes luxury electric vehicle tax credits and handouts to politically-connected companies. The so-called "Inflation Reduction Act" enacted by Democrats last year gives $271 billion in tax credits to pay for "green" energy projects favored by the Democrat donor class and $362 million for big businesses to "greenify" their corporate HQs.

The same taxpayers who see their dollars go to fund this partisan ESG agenda that favors the wealthy and special interests are set to lose money in retirement accounts that now lack protection against low-return investments that align with the Biden administration's extreme agenda.

The new Republican House Majority will hold the Biden administration accountable and ensure that our tax rules support Americans' financial security, create jobs, spur investment in all corners of America, and provide higher wages for working families. If Wall Street chooses to cozy up to a radical Democrat agenda, Republicans will stand up for the best interests of the American worker so they can retire in dignity.

Jason Smith is a United States Representative from Missouri's Eighth Congressional District. He serves as the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee and is a strong advocate for rural Missouri and all of rural America.

SEC's uncharted territory focuses on activists, not investors

By U.S. Rep. Alex X. Mooney

President Joe Biden has declared war on the American fossil fuel industry, and by extension, the people of West Virginia who rely on the industry for good-paying jobs to support their families.

When the Obama-Biden war on fossil fuels was first launched in 2009, coal mining gainfully employed nearly 28,000 West Virginians. Today, that number has shrunk to under 14,000—a 50% decrease. Recently, President Biden declared "We're going to be shutting these plants down all across America," referring to coal-fired plants.

An American president so brazenly bragging about putting Americans out of work is disgraceful. President Biden's war on fossil fuels is directly harming America's economy. And don't forget, while President Biden tries to shut down domestic energy production, he begs Middle Eastern countries to increase their oil production to combat the energy inflation crisis of his own making. High gas prices affect all Americans, but they disproportionately hurt rural communities that have no choice but to drive.

Almost every action taken by President Biden and his administration has a result of worsening American energy independence. Last year, the President and Congressional Democrats muscled through the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, which amounted to taxpayer subsidies for electric vehicles and imposed crippling taxes on coal production. Despite its name, the legislation did nothing to reduce runaway inflation that is hitting Americans hard at the grocery store and the gas pump.

It is a shame to see West Virginia's own Senator Joe Manchin support a plan so devastating to the people he is supposed to represent. He is aligning himself with the most radical socialist members of the Democrat Party and West Virginians are suffering the consequences.

Fortunately, President Biden and his allies have been unsuccessful in passing many of their more radical climate priorities in Congress through the democratic process. Instead, the President has turned to financial regulators to abuse their authority and bypass Congress to implement these policies. This includes nominating radicals such as Sarah Bloom Raskin to the Federal Reserve and Saule Omarova to the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency who both openly called for choking off capital to fossil fuel companies. However, the most damaging regulatory agency has been the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) chaired by Gary Gensler.

When people think of the SEC, they generally don't associate it with climate change. The SEC's mission is to protect investors, facilitate capital formation, and foster fair, orderly and efficient markets. To achieve these objectives, the SEC has the power to compel the disclosure of information that is material to investors.

The SEC has put forward a plan to name and shame fossil fuel companies.

However, some activist investors have tried to distort the SEC's investor-oriented disclosure rules to force companies to make behavior changes, regardless of whether they are in the interest of investors. For example, they have called on the SEC to address many societal issues that are far outside the SEC's jurisdiction and expertise, such as climate change.

As a result, the SEC has entered uncharted territory as it proposed sweeping new rules that would require publicly traded companies, and perhaps even private companies, to disclose climate-related data without the requisite congressional authority. These rules would have a significant impact not only on how companies operate but how energy companies are valued and their access to capital. Make no mistake, the SEC has put forward a plan to name and shame fossil fuel companies—just as the radicals demanded. The U.S. capital markets, and all West Virginians, stand to lose.

As a member of the House Committee on Financial Services, I can assure you that the SEC is completely ill-equipped to carry out President Biden's implausible green energy aspirations. At a time when the number of American companies going public is on the decline and the risk of a recession is on the rise, the SEC must stay within its jurisdiction and expertise. That means focusing on the needs of real investors rather than activists. Setting climate policy is the job of lawmakers, not financial regulators. America's ability to lead on the global stage depends on our economic strength, not advancing an extreme agenda through regulatory fiat.

Alex Mooney is a United States Representative from West Virginia's Second Congressional District. He serves on the House Financial Services Committee, which oversees some of the most important economic issues facing West Virginians such as banking, insurance, housing and investment policies. Prior to the U.S. House, he served as a state senator.

How leftist ESG is turning America into a fascist state

By U.S. Rep. Andy Biggs

In China, the Communist Party has devised a scheme to compel compliance. They score every person and business to determine whether they are sufficiently in line with the Party's standards. In America, this type of fascistic overreach is known as "ESG." ESG fuses big government, big tech, and big business, and this tyranny is coming for you.

In the Chinese version of this attempt to control people, the government, big business, and big tech are married to each other in what is referred to as a "social credit system." It began with studying shopping habits but has morphed into a system to score a person's social acceptance by their behavior. And like a financial credit score, it fluctuates.

Post about fake news or bad personal habits, and your score goes down. You can be punished by having your travel restricted. If you find yourself on the "blacklist," people who call you will hear a siren and a message warning the caller that you are in arrears on your debt.

And in the U.S. and Europe the cartel of big business, big tech, and big government, have landed on a tool known as "ESG." It stands for environment, social, and governance. ESG is being used to promote woke, leftist policies through authoritarian means.

A feature of ESG is the cozy relationship between radically left big government and the radical leftists in big business. The interlocking relationships between government, business, and big tech form the D.C. cartel.

ESG fuses big government, big tech, and big business, and this tyranny is coming for you.

The nub is to rank individuals and businesses, similar to what goes on in China, on whether that person or business is woke enough on environmental issues, radical social issues like transgender affirmation, and whether your business hires the right kind of people.

An investment banker might reject your request for capital investment because the Cartel says you're in the wrong industry, maybe gun manufacturing or oil and gas production. You obviously fail on the E or the S or the G components. Your ESG score is too low. It won't matter whether you can repay a loan or provide a return on investment.

ESG then becomes a way to control the population. Freedom out, tyranny in.

While there isn't evidence that Pfizer was implementing an ESG score in its hiring matrix, it is accused of not hiring Whites and Asians. Restrictions like this would be consistent with attempting to get a higher ESG score because a component of the score is that one should only hire the "right" people, the ones who fit into the "social" component of the ESG matrix. Discrimination in the name of equity and social credit.

Mammoth investment firm, BlackRock, is all in on the ESG scam. The firm runs ESG-based investment funds and charges huge fees to make sure that companies in which it invests have sufficiently appropriate ESG compliance.

While some investors embrace the radical left agenda encapsulated in the ESG movement, some state and local pension administrators have divested from BlackRock and other ESG funds.

Arizona Treasurer Kimberly Yee said when she began divesting from BlackRock: "Part of the review by [the Investment Risk Management Committee] involved reading the annual letters by CEO Larry Fink, which in recent years, began dictating to businesses in the United States to follow his personal political beliefs. In short, BlackRock moved from a traditional asset manager to a political action committee. Our internal investment team believed this moved the firm away from its fiduciary duty in general as an asset manager."

Now consider the proud admission at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, by FBI Director Wray, that the FBI is working collaboratively with big tech, ostensibly to spy on Americans. We know of the FBI's promulgation of anti-Trump propaganda, and the Director wants an even closer working relationship with the big tech censors?

ESG is a dangerous homage to the long history of attacks on the people by their own government.

Add to this creepy ESG conglomeration the weaponization of our federal police apparatus and you have the making of a totalistic society where Americans are under the thumb of the corrupt, controlling D.C. cartel.

Andy Biggs is a United States Representative from Arizona's Fifth Congressional District. He is a member of the House Judiciary and Oversight and Accountability Committees, and serves as chairman of the House Freedom Caucus, co-chair of the Border Security Caucus, co-chair of the War Powers Caucus, and Vice chair of the Western Caucus. Prior to the U.S. House, he served in the Arizona Legislature for 14 years – the last four as the Arizona Senate President.

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Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., pauses before leaving an intelligence briefing on the unknown aerial objects the U.S. military shot down this weekend at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2023. The incidents come shortly after a Chinese surveillance balloon traversed the U.S. and was shot down off South Carolina a week ago.

Joe Manchin: ESG hurts energy security if geopolitical risks get ignored

By Ramsey Touchberry
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Sen. Joe Manchin III is offering a word of caution for enthusiasts of environmental, social and governance investing, or ESG, saying that the practice of considering climate change and other political matters in investments could threaten energy security amid geopolitical risks from Russia.

The Russia-Ukraine war, the conservative West Virginia Democrat said, underscores the need to have a balance between investing in both clean energy and fossil fuels, rather than leaning on ESG, which conservatives call a form of "woke capitalism."

"Colleges, universities, you have different investment firms — they're looking only at ESG and not geopolitical risks. They're not being reasonable [or] practical," Mr. Manchin told The Washington Times. "If you hang your hat on one thing, without the geopolitical risks — just ask Europe what they've gone through."

He emphasized that he is "not criticizing ESG and the overall consideration of ESG and [our] responsibilities" to address climate change.

Rather, Mr. Manchin said both ESG and geopolitical risks "should be considered when we're making decisions on the energy of our country and energy that our allies need [and] how we're going to produce that."

Mr. Manchin's remarks came as the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which he chairs, examined the state of global energy security roughly one year after Russia invaded Ukraine. His concerns also came amid a multibillion-dollar campaign by Republican-led states to divest public funds from investment firms such as BlackRock that practice ESG.

He questioned European Commission Director-General for Energy Ditte Juul Jorgensen during a hearing held by his panel Thursday whether she felt Europe has put too many of its eggs in the ESG basket by being heavily reliant on Russian oil and natural gas.

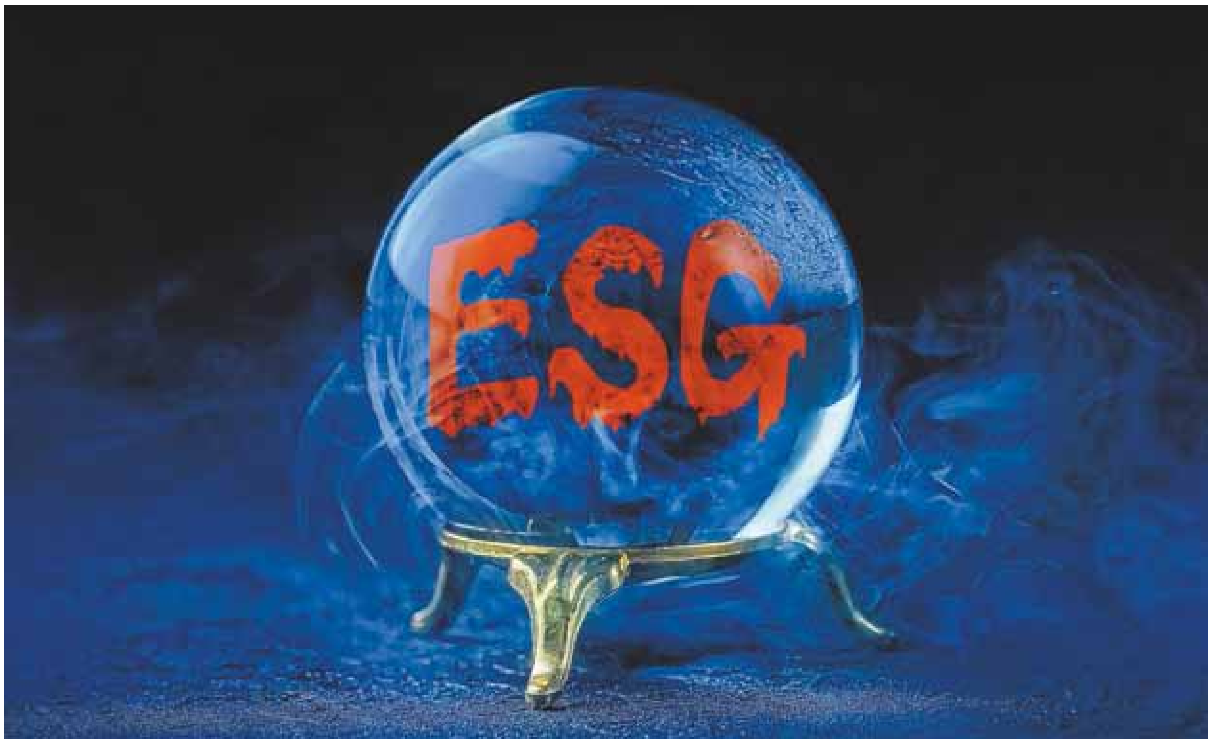
She responded that while ESG will remain prevalent, the war has forced them to refocus more financing on overall energy security, regardless of its climate impact.

"ESG remains an important factor to guide our taxonomy, as an element to guide investors to the extent they want to have a green portfolio or green funds. That does not mean that investments into security of supply are non-relevant. It's an important selling point, if you will, from a sector perspective," Ms. Jorgensen testified. "The way we have looked at it in terms of our public financing or European financing is that we will be financing more into the energy transition, but financing into security of supply has been a high priority."

Mr. Manchin has waded into the hot-button ESG debate in recent weeks.

Earlier this month, he sided with all 49 Senate Republicans in a bid to scuttle new rules from the Labor Department that allow retirement-plan fiduciaries to engage in ESG investing, which critics say jeopardizes the 401(k) accounts of roughly 150 million Americans.

This is a Washington Times staff-written news article first published online on February 16, 2023.



The predicable political mess of ESG

By David F. Larcker, Amit Seru, and Brian Tayan

Advocates of ESG intend it as a force for economic and social good. Instead, it has brought nothing but controversy.

ESG—short-hand for environmental, social, and governance—is intended to reorient capital and governance around stakeholder welfare, away from its traditional primary focus on shareholder value.

ESG suffers at its core from three main problems: It brings uncertain benefits, at uncertain cost, with no clear identification of who will pay for it.

First, the promise. Advocates pitch ESG as a more inclusive form of capitalism, one where companies consider the needs of all stakeholders in the planning process—employees, customers, suppliers, and society at large—and not just shareholders. While shareholder returns continue to be important, they are pursued through a framework that also addresses societal and environmental concerns.

Doing so, however, is costly. Companies cannot improve upon what they are already doing unless they invest significant sums of money. In the long run, ESG advocates expect the returns from these investments to outweigh any cost, leading to profits that are larger, more sustainable, and more equitably distributed across stakeholders.

Many large companies have publicly embraced ESG, in one form or another. Either they believe in the promise, or they enjoy the reputational advantages of publicly claiming to do so by "virtue signaling."

But are these promises being realized? This is much less certain. The research is coming in piecemeal. What we know so far is that companies that embrace ESG are not necessarily more profitable. They also do not appear to perform better along environmental, social, and other stakeholder metrics, despite a commitment to doing so. And their stocks do not appear to outperform, with some evidence they underperform.

ESG suffers at its core from three main problems: It brings uncertain benefits, at uncertain cost, with no clear identification of who will pay for it.

This should not be entirely surprising. If ESG actually delivers such large benefits, you would have to wonder why capitalistic companies did not embrace it sooner. It would call into question the governance system we have had in place in the United States over the last century—one that has created trillions of dollars in wealth and millions of high-quality, safe jobs across all states and educational levels. It is worth noting that a very long list of organizations (e.g., auditors, consulting firms, ESG rating companies) stand to benefit financially from widespread adoption of ESG without regard to its impact.

At the same time, the challenges of ESG are becoming more evident. Most CEOs and CFOs do not subscribe to the belief that ESG brings long-term gains despite near-term costs. They are most likely to say its costs will never be fully recovered. General Counsel express significant concern about the legal and regulatory risk of ESG activities.

While investors seem to be generally supportive, they are not uniformly so. Younger and wealthier investors claim to be largely in favor of ESG and willing to forfeit substantial personal wealth to advance it. The most vulnerable members of society—older investors and those with low retirement savings—are not willing to give up anything. Stated differently, these groups are not willing to pay the cost of ESG.

Institutional investors, who are compensated based on the returns they earn relative to benchmarks, are also not willing to give up returns to finance ESG. In a recent study of "green bonds" used to finance environmental projects, researchers find that institutional investors are only willing to forfeit one one-hundredth of a percent in yield to buy a green bond over an identical bond not used for environmental financing.

At the same time, ESG has become highly politicized. Those on one side of the aisle are doubling down that ESG is critical from a societal perspective. Those on the other are equally adamant that the benefits are too uncertain and the costs too high to bear.

The only way to resolve the controversy is to have a clear accounting of ESG. What specifically are the benefits that ESG is intended to achieve, and how much will they cost? Then, we need agreement over who is going to pay for it. Will it be shareholders through lower returns? Workers through lower employment compensation? Or customers through higher purchasing costs? A measurement system will need to be put in place to track whether objectives are being met.

Until we try to actually measure the true costs and benefits of ESG, in cold hard dollars, the division will only grow. Otherwise, it might just come down to a shouting match where those with the louder voices, and political control, win.

David Larcker is a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution, and the James Irvin Miller Professor of Accounting, Emeritus, and director of the Corporate Governance Research Initiative at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Amit Seru is The Steven and Roberta Denning Professor of Finance at Stanford Graduate School of Business, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR), and a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). Brian Tayan is a Senior Researcher at the Corporate Governance Initiative at Stanford Graduate School of Business. Together, the coauthors on a survey that Stanford GSB and Hoover did middle of last year (referenced in here).

HOOVER INSTITUTION

ASSOCIATED PRESS

In this Feb. 15, 2006, file photo, BlackRock headquarters is shown in New York.

Texas' massive public pension drops BlackRock, other 'anti-oil' investment firms

By Ramsey Touchberry
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Teacher Retirement System of Texas, with nearly 2 million participants, has reportedly divested from BlackRock and other major firms over their investment policies locked into climate change.

The move comes in the wake of a new law in oil-rich Texas that prohibits state agencies from doing business with financial institutions deemed hostile to the fossil fuel industry because of environmental, social and governance investing, or ESG.

Brian Guthrie, executive director of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas, told state officials in a recent letter that it sold shares in BlackRock and other corporations in order to comply with the law.

The letter and sell-off were first reported by Bloomberg.

It was not clear how much the teacher pension system divested from BlackRock and nine other companies, but the fund had nearly $184 billion in assets under management at the end of 2022.

The Teacher Retirement System of Texas declined to disclose a dollar figure and asked that a public record request be formally filed.

BlackRock did not immediately respond to a request for comment and questions about the amount divested.

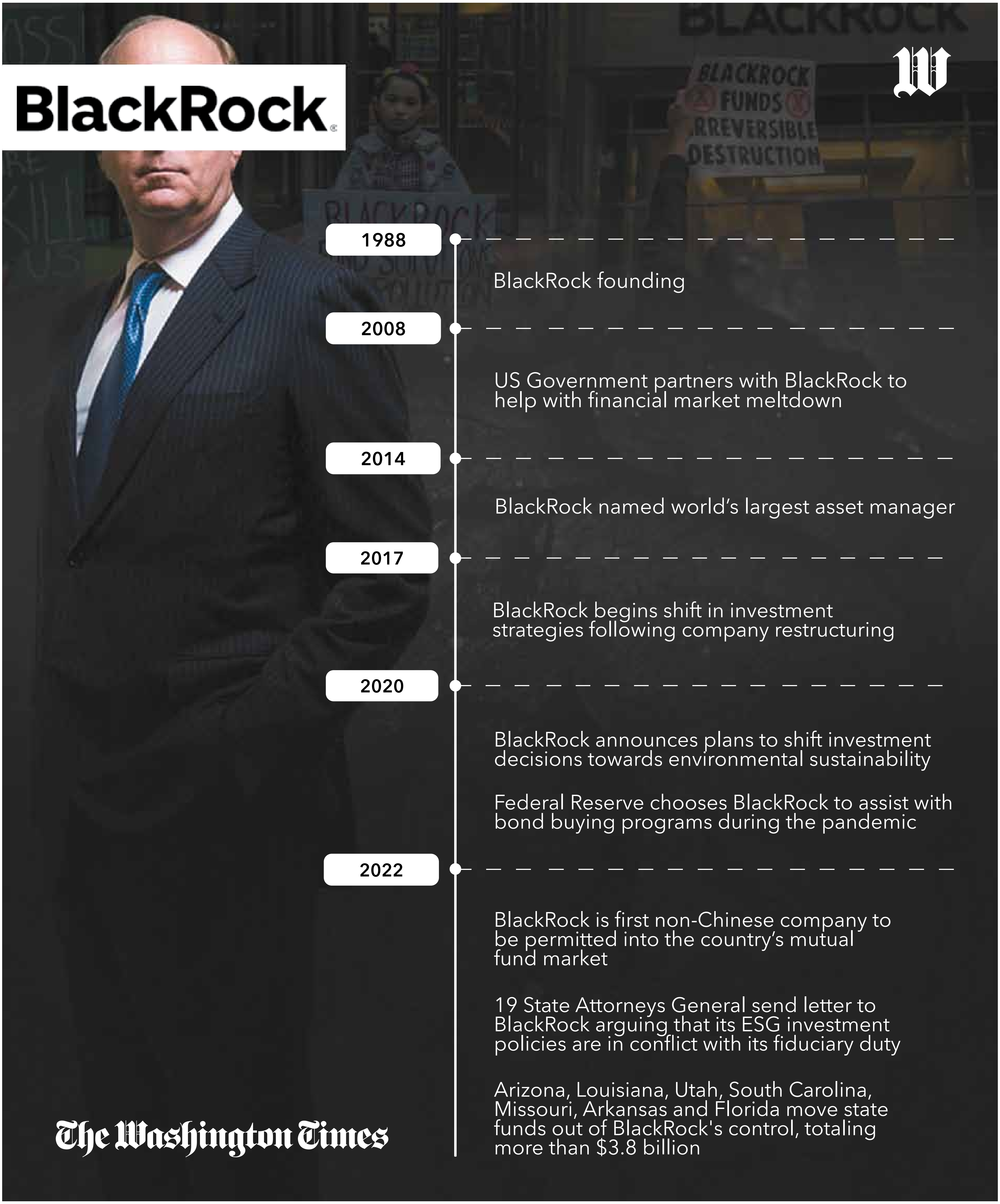
The other firms reportedly divested from include Credit Suisse, BNP Paribas, Danske Bank, Jupiter Fund Management, Nordea Bank, Schroders, Svenska, Handelsbanken, Swedbank and UBS.

The dissociation from the financial corporations is part of a larger anti-ESG war among red states and House Republicans waged against "woke capitalism." ESG investing involves taking into consideration factors outside of just returns, such as climate change and social political issues.

Republican officials in various states have divested more than $4 billion from BlackRock, which has been deemed the ESG poster child by critics.

BlackRock has consistently rejected the anti-fossil fuel label that Republicans have slapped them with, telling The Washington Times last week that the firm had more than $200 billion invested in energy companies on behalf of clients.

This is a Washington Times staff-written news article first published online on February 7, 2023.



BlackRock

1988

BlackRock founding

2008

US Government partners with BlackRock to help with financial market meltdown

2014

BlackRock named world's largest asset manager

2017

BlackRock begins shift in investment strategies following company restructuring

2020

BlackRock announces plans to shift investment decisions towards environmental sustainability

Federal Reserve chooses BlackRock to assist with bond buying programs during the pandemic

2022

BlackRock is first non-Chinese company to be permitted into the country's mutual fund market

19 State Attorneys General send letter to BlackRock arguing that its ESG investment policies are in conflict with its fiduciary duty

Arizona, Louisiana, Utah, South Carolina, Missouri, Arkansas and Florida move state funds out of BlackRock's control, totaling more than $3.8 billion

The Washington Times

J2R/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Facade of a bank branch of Wells Fargo in Manhattan, New York City, USA.

States' $4 billion war on ESG forces big financial firms to retreat from 'woke' investments

By Ramsey Touchberry
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The multibillion-dollar battle that Republican-led states have waged against major financial firms that have gone "woke" is starting to pay off.

Wall Street institutions vehemently reject the criticism that they side with left-leaning environmental politics over their fiduciary responsibility. But they've been forced to go on defense as red states withdraw investments in droves to protest environmental, social and governance (ESG) corporate investment strategies, which critics say are anti-fossil fuel because they factor in climate change considerations.

One of the latest gut punches to ESG proponents and environmentalists came from investment firm Vanguard Group, which recently called it quits with the world's largest climate finance alliance known as the Net Zero Asset Managers initiative. Its exit allowed the company's executives to be excused from a recent tense grilling of financial firms by the Texas Legislature as part of its probe into ESG.

"This pressure that we're creating at the state level, I think it's sometimes less about the totality of dollars that are moving. It's also raising a massive amount of awareness in the public's mind about what this problem really is. We have a fiduciary duty to do that," West Virginia Treasurer Riley Moore said in an interview.

Mr. Moore, a Republican who is running for the House in 2024, cemented his status as the unofficial ringleader of the anti-ESG movement when West Virginia became the first state to cease business with major banking institutions like BlackRock, Wells Fargo and others because he deemed them hostile to fossil fuels.

The energy-rich state has since been followed by seven other Republican-led states that have taken similar action, cumulatively divesting nearly $4.3 billion in public funds from BlackRock alone this year, according to a Washington Times analysis. It may seem like a minuscule amount of money for a company with some $8 trillion assets under management, but BlackRock executives have increasingly pushed back as other investment corporations have begun to retreat.

U.S. Bancorp was spared from Mr. Moore's boycott list because he said the bank removed the fossil fuel industry from its lending blacklist, a policy reversal that a company spokesperson has said preceded the state's threats and was unrelated.

Another potential sign of the anti-ESG campaign's effectiveness came at a recent climate-finance meeting attended by BlackRock, Goldman Sachs and other major financial institutions when a lawyer kicked off the meeting with a disclaimer they are not a cartel. Bloomberg reported the stipulation was read aloud in an effort to protect them against running afoul of countries' anti-competition rules and to speak more freely about ESG.

Mr. Moore described ESG as "coercive capitalism" designed as a "distortion in the free market in which they're trying to manipulate it toward their advantage and political goals."

"At the end of the day, all we're asking for is the free market to remain free. For a very long time, there was only risk on one side of this equation, and that was if you didn't conform to what BlackRock was doing in the financial sector of this country, then you were out of step," he said. "Now, we've provided risk on the other side."

BlackRock has increasingly pushed back against conservative criticism, and it's yet to show a willingness to back down even as Republicans plan to haul its executives in for testimony when they take control of the House.

BlackRock told The Washington Times that it looks "forward to continuing to work together with policymakers from both parties" because of the topic's significance.

"Important work lies ahead to strengthen America's capital markets, help Americans plan and save for retirement, and ensure asset owners have freedom and choice to make the financial decisions that best suit their unique individual needs," the company said.

The states that pulled public money from BlackRock this year, most of which were state pension funds, include $2 billion from Florida, $794 million from Louisiana, $543 million from Arizona, $500 million from Missouri, $200 million from South Carolina, $125 million from Arkansas, $100 million from Utah and $20 million from West Virginia.

"Climate risks — and other environmental risks, depending on the industry — have been material risks for companies to consider since the 1970s," Dalia Blass, head of BlackRock's external affairs, recently testified to Texas state senators. "In the reshaping of finance when it comes to the transition to a low-carbon economy, this is the reshaping: looking at the unpriced risks, looking at opportunities in the transition. We believe that, if managed in an orderly fashion, that could actually produce better risk-adjusted returns for our clients' portfolios."

She argued the more than $100 billion BlackRock has invested in a half-dozen public energy companies that operate in Texas was evidence the company does not have a fossil fuels boycott.

BlackRock recently reaffirmed to investors its bullish outlook on ESG, saying in an annual report that "climate-related risks and opportunities can be a key factor in many companies' long-term prospects."

"We continue to look for companies to disclose strategies they have in place that mitigate and are resilient to any material risks to their long-term business model associated with a range of climate-related scenarios," the company stated.

This is a Washington Times staff-written news article first published online on December 27, 2022.

Poll: Most voters favor businesses that stay out of politics

By Sean Salai
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Most likely voters say they are more likely to do business with companies that stay out of politics, according to a poll released Wednesday.

Among all respondents, 78.8% told the Trafalgar Group/Convention of States Action they are "more likely" to patronize a business "that stayed politically neutral and tolerated viewpoints of employees and customers across the board."

Another 10.1% said they are "less likely" to do business with a politically neutral company and 11% said they are "not sure," the poll found.

"Businesses that stay out of politics and focus on serving their customers ... will thrive," said Mark Meckler of the Texas-based Convention of States Action, which advocates for returning federal powers to the states.

Mr. Meckler added: "So, instead of wondering how many diversity and inclusion officers they have, corporations should be worried about how they are intentionally alienating a broad group of Americans who will just shop somewhere else."

The poll found 82.3% of Republican voters, 77.1% of independents and 76.9% of Democrats were more likely to interact with neutral companies.

About 39.3% of respondents identified as Democrats, 35.6% as Republicans and 25.1% as independents.

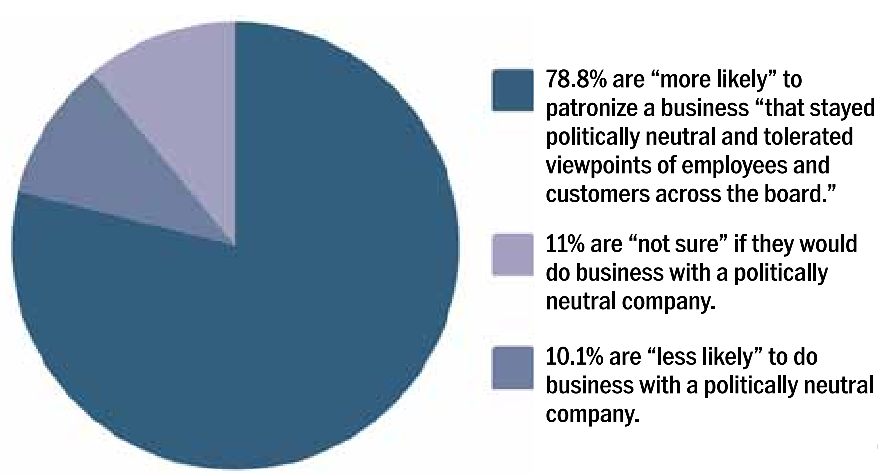
The firm distributes its survey questionnaires using a mixed methodology of live callers, integrated voice response, text messages, emails and two other proprietary digital methods that it doesn't share publicly.

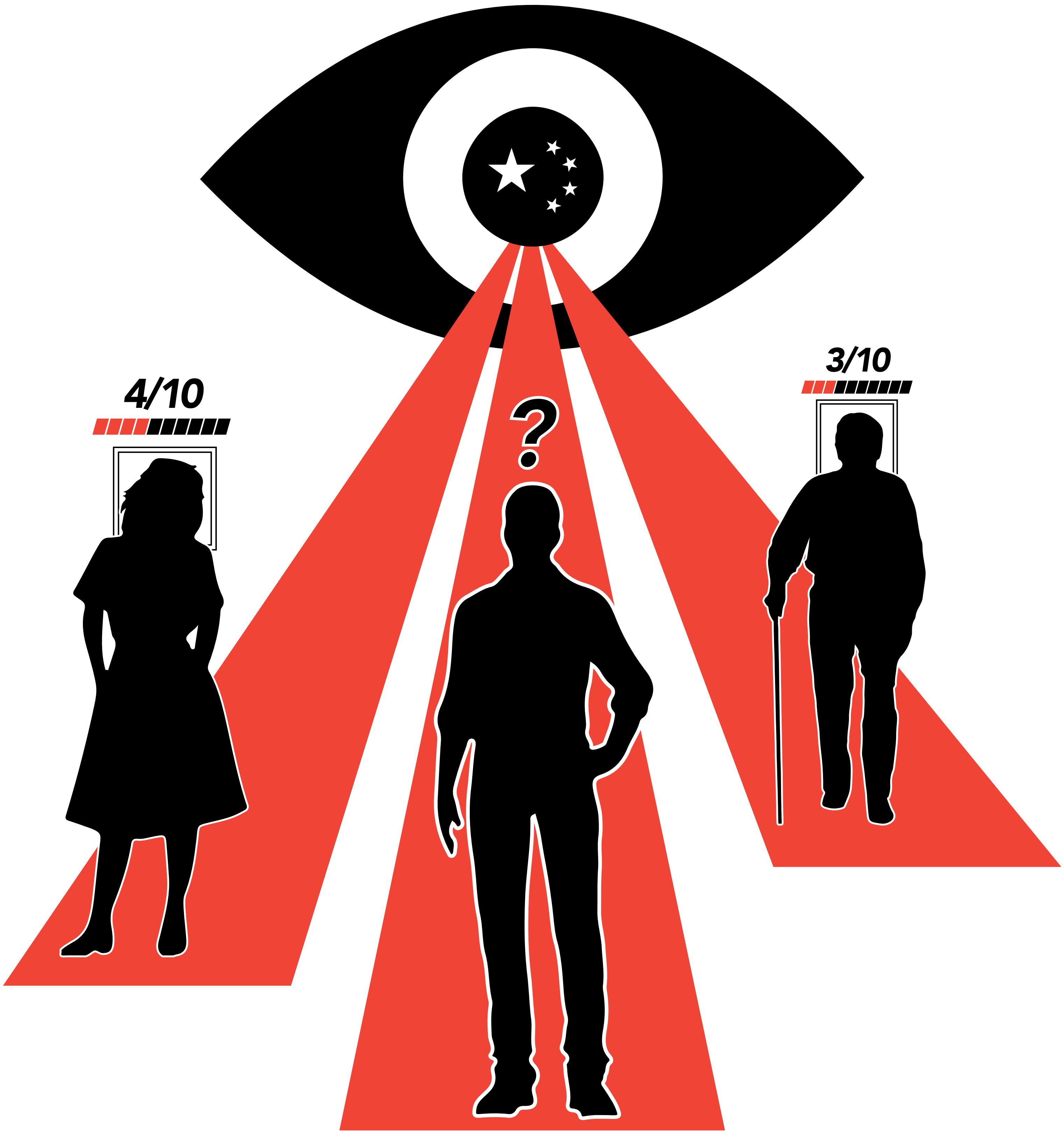
Trafalgar surveyed 1,092 likely general election voters on Feb. 2-5. The margin of error was plus or minus 2.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

This is a Washington Times staff-written news article first published online on February 15, 2023.

POLL: MOST VOTERS FAVOR BUSINESSES THAT STAY OUT OF POLITICS

Most likely voters say they are more likely to do business with companies that stay out of politics, according to a poll.





DON'T LET ESG CANCEL YOU

Who does ESG hurt? *Everyone...*

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) scores are a social credit system designed to coerce businesses—and you—to conform to a radical, anti-American agenda.

ESG scores are authoritarian, and make America more dependent on Communist China's energy and resources.

ESGhurts.com

HERITAGE ACTION FOR AMERICA