

Two U.S. Senators Express Concern Over Chevron Lobbying Tactics in Nation's Capitol Reports Amazon Watch

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WASHINGTON-- Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Barack Obama (D-Ill) have written to the U.S. Trade Representative asking that he stop Chevron's lobbying to undermine a historic environmental lawsuit against the company in Ecuador's rainforest.

Chevron faces a potential multi-billion dollar liability in the class- action case for clean-up of what experts believe is the worst oil-related contamination in the world, affecting an estimated 30,000 people in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

The Senators sent a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Robert Portman on Feb. 2 urging him to ignore Chevron's campaign to exclude Ecuador from trade negotiations until the Ecuadorian government shuts down the lawsuit.

The senators write: "We are writing to seek your assurances that the U.S. Trade Representative will not allow negotiations over the Andean Free Trade Agreement to interfere with a case involving Chevron that is under consideration by the Ecuadorian judiciary, particularly one involving environmental, health and human rights issues that have regional importance.

While we are not prejudging the outcome of the case, we do believe the 30,000 indigenous residents of Ecuador deserve their day in court."

Since the trial began in 2003, all 22 sites inspected by the court so far have been found to be contaminated. One site had levels of Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons 9,000 times higher than allowed in most U.S. states.

Chevron's lobbying of Congress has sparked outrage in Ecuador because Chevron argued for years before a U.S. federal court, where the case was originally filed, that it would recognize the jurisdiction of the Ecuador court and abide by any judgment.

"This campaign is morally reprehensible because it violates an express promise Chevron made to the U.S. court as a condition of getting the case sent to Ecuador," said Luis Yanza, a representative of the affected communities.

"Our people are dying while Chevron spends millions on lobbyists to undermine the rule of law."

Earlier this month, Chevron was hit with a complaint filed to the Securities and Exchange Commission for allegedly hiding its Ecuador liability. Studies have found elevated rates of cancer in the region where Chevron operated.

For full details, including independent scientific reports, of the lawsuit and international campaign to hold Chevron to account, visit <http://www.chevrontoxico.com> or <http://www.amazonwatch.org>

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