

To: Interested Parties

From: Caroline Ciccone, President of Accountable.US

RE: New Accountable.US Report Uncovers Justice Gorsuch Conflicts of Interest in NEPA Case

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Accountable.US Report: New Findings On Close Relationship Between Justice Neil Gorsuch and Billionaire Philip Anschutz Require Gorsuch to Recuse from Key Environmental Law Case Amidst History Of Recusal In Cases Involving Anschutz

During this Supreme Court term, the Justices will hear *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County, Colo.*, a case that could weaken the environmental protections under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Ahead of the new term, **Accountable.US** [*released a new report revealing new findings that present a significant conflict of interest for Justice Neil Gorsuch.*](#) The case, in which Anschutz's own company filed an amicus brief, would likely provide substantial financial benefits to one of Gorsuch's associates, billionaire oil baron Philip F. Anschutz, the head of the Anschutz Exploration Corporation. Gorsuch has previously recused himself from cases involving Anschutz and his companies.

If the Court rules in favor of the petitioners and weakens NEPA, it would dramatically lower environmental review standards for infrastructure projects on federal land. The Anschutz Exploration Corporation's drilling proposals have required environmental assessments at least 86 times. Anschutz recognizes the importance of the outcome of this case as well. The Anschutz Exploration Corporation filed an amicus brief on September 4, urging the Court to rule in favor of the petitioners and weaker environmental protections.

Gorsuch's Conflicts of Interest with Philip F. Anschutz

Justice Gorsuch's relationship with Philip Anschutz dates back to the early 2000s when Gorsuch served as outside legal counsel to Anschutz's companies. In early 2006, while Gorsuch was completing a brief stint at the Department of Justice, a lawyer, writing at Anschutz's request, contacted the Bush administration to encourage the president to nominate Gorsuch to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. The U.S. Senate confirmed Gorsuch to the bench a few months later.

On the Tenth Circuit, Justice Gorsuch recused himself from dozens of cases involving Anschutz and his companies. At the same time, Gorsuch's association with Anschutz and his business empire deepened. Gorsuch became a semi-regular speaker at annual dove-hunting retreats on Anschutz's sprawling Eagles Nest Ranch in eastern Colorado. The justice also purchased a property north of Denver along with a director at Anschutz Exploration and another Anschutz associate. The trio jointly owned the property for several years.

Anschutz Stands to Benefit from the Rail Line at the Issue in This Case

At the core of the case is the Uinta Basin Railway, a project that would facilitate the transportation of oil from Utah's Uinta Basin—where [Anschutz Exploration](#) has substantial operations—to refineries elsewhere in the country. If completed, the rail line would reduce transportation costs, providing a financial boon to regional producers, like Anschutz Exploration.

The quick construction of the Uinta Basin Railway would be in the best financial interest of the Anschutz Exploration Corporation. But, as the company wrote in a recent amicus brief, “far more is at stake in this case than the 88-mile rail line in rural Utah.” A ruling narrowing NEPA's scope would allow all projects on federal public land to move forward with fewer environmental reviews, benefiting extractive industries. Given the direct interest Anschutz has in the outcome of this case, questions are necessarily being raised about Gorsuch's ability to remain impartial.

NEPA's Future on the Line

The *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County, Colo.* case is more than just a battle over a single project. At its heart is whether federal agencies should be required to consider the indirect and cumulative environmental impacts—such as greenhouse gas emissions—when approving significant infrastructure developments. Environmental advocates argue that reducing NEPA's scope would undermine one of the nation's most important tools for safeguarding public lands and addressing climate change.

If the Court sides with the energy companies, the decision could set a precedent that weakens environmental protections for years to come, giving corporations a clearer path to push forward projects with fewer checks on their impact.

What's at Stake?

If the Supreme Court rules in favor of the energy companies and infrastructure backers, it could:

- Weaken environmental review standards under NEPA.
- Allow energy infrastructure projects to bypass evaluations of their potential impacts on climate change and ecosystems.
- Make it harder for environmental advocates to challenge high-risk projects in court.

With Justice Gorsuch's deep ties to billionaire oil baron Philip Anschutz, the Court's impartiality is being closely watched. The decision in this case could impact not only environmental law but also the integrity of the judiciary itself.

Read the whole report [here](#).