

NO TOXIC MONEY: PLEDGE TOOLKIT



INTRODUCTION

The No Toxic Money pledge states: **"I will take no money or gifts from Duke Energy, Dominion Energy, or their affiliates, including from their Political Action Committees (PAC), lobbyists, and executives. In addition, I support a moratorium on all of their new fossil fuel infrastructure projects."**

In this toolkit, we will cover:

- Why the pledge matters and what it means to take the pledge
- How to get a candidate to sign the pledge – in 5 easy steps

We also go into more detail:

- How to identify target candidates
- How to ask candidates to sign
- How to follow up – don't forget this part!
- FAQs for activists and candidates
- Pledge resources and links

The pledge is an open-source campaign tool that anyone can use at any level in our democracy to connect grassroots activists with political leaders in the mission of a monopoly-free democracy. This toolkit can be used by an individual activist, a local volunteer group, or an existing nonprofit organization.

WHY THE PLEDGE MATTERS

Our democracy is drowning in a tidal wave of influence money from electric monopolies such as Duke Energy and Dominion Energy. The “No Toxic Money” pledge represents a bright line between candidates who stand for transparency, strong environmental protection and real climate action, and candidates who might say the right words on these issues but continue to take polluters’ money – poisoning our democracy in the process.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TAKE THE NO TOXIC MONEY PLEDGE?

Taking the pledge means that a candidate’s campaign will adopt a policy to not knowingly accept any contributions from Duke Energy and Dominion Energy’s PACs, executives, lobbyists or affiliates. The pledge is forward-looking from the filing deadline for the 2020 General Election (December 20, 2019) but it does not apply retroactively to contributions prior to 12-20-19. The commitment begins the moment a politician takes the pledge.

HOW TO GET A CANDIDATE TO SIGN THE PLEDGE – 5 EASY STEPS!

- Identify a target candidate you’d like to ask to sign the pledge.
- Print out [our pre-made pledge sign-on sheet](#)
- Ask the candidate in person to sign the pledge
- Take a photo of the candidate signing the pledge and share on social media
- Let us know how it went by emailing info@notoxicmoney.org
- Ask the candidate to fill out the pledge-signer form at <https://notoxicmoney.org/>

We’re publicizing all of the pledge signers on our website, <https://notoxicmoney.org/>, as well as on Twitter ([@NoToxicMoneyNC](#)) and [Facebook](#) with the hashtag #NoToxicMoneyNC.

HOW TO IDENTIFY TARGET CANDIDATES

Ideally, every politician and wannabe politician in your area from county dogcatcher to governor and U.S. Senator should be approached. Political offices in your state are in a pyramid structure, with hundreds of local offices, dozens of state representatives, and only a few members of Congress. By keeping that pyramid in mind, we can learn from the success of similar efforts — such as the national No Fossil Fuel Money pledge — in getting local *and* federal candidates to sign.

APPROACH YOUR LOCAL CANDIDATES: Begin with local candidates, then proceed to the next level. A state legislative candidate likes to hear that local city/county candidates have signed; a Congressional candidate likewise wants to hear that state legislative candidates have signed. Remember that local officials are influential stakeholders in fossil fuel infrastructure projects like pipelines and power plants. Electric monopolies often form alliances with local officials.

CONTACT STATE LEVEL CANDIDATES: We want to be sure to get as many state legislators and candidates to sign as possible because they will be the regulators of Duke and Dominion. Sometimes a candidate for a top-level office is already a leader on climate and campaign finance, and will quickly take the pledge. If one of your state-level or federal-office candidates has already signed, it can be easy to get local candidates to join in. “Connie Congress member has already signed, will you be next?”

TAKE OVER A TIER WITH EVERY CANDIDATE IN A SPECIFIC RACE: Target everyone in the same race! If all candidates in a primary race sign the pledge, we are assured that whoever faces the opposing party in the election will be free of toxic influence money.

HOW TO ASK CANDIDATES TO SIGN

Pick a time and place where the candidate will want to sign the No Toxic Money pledge:

- In an email or via social media
- In a one-on-one meeting, ideally through a personal relationship
- At a friendly event, where the crowd is likely to cheer signing of the pledge
- At a multi-candidate event such as a forum or debate
- At a petition delivery if the candidate requires convincing

In all cases, have your tools at hand: A printed copy of the pledge, a bold marking pen such as a Sharpie, and a camera or smartphone. [Print out the pledge here](#) (it's optimized for landscape mode on a printer). Also, [this 18×24 downloadable poster](#) is great for photo opps.

EMAIL: Sometimes getting a candidate to sign is as simple as sending an email or posting info about the pledge on the candidate's social media platforms. In any case you can use it to start a conversation. Here's a sample e-mail:

Hi Name,

My name is Matias Cabeza and I'm working with Friends of the Earth. I'm part of the No Toxic Money coalition in North Carolina, an effort designed to help rid our democracy of monopoly utility interests and protect the health of our families and our climate.

I'm writing you to ask if CANDIDATE would add HIS/HER name to the growing list of federal, state, and local candidates and elected officials such as (list some candidates who have taken the pledge; see our website) who have pledged to reject campaign contributions from Duke Energy and Dominion Energy and support a moratorium on their new fossil fuel infrastructure projects. Will CANDIDATE sign the No Toxic Money pledge?

To sign, you can just visit [here](#) and follow the prompts.

If you have any questions about the pledge or this effort, please feel free to email me or call me at (386) 333-0072. I'd love to meet with you in person. My vote and many others rely on this pledge.

All the best,

Matias Cabeza

ONE-ON-ONE SIGNING: The simplest approach is to directly ask Cassie the Candidate, which often works if you have an existing personal relationship.

"Hey Cassie! I'm so excited you're running for office. Will you sign a pledge to not take money from Duke Energy or Dominion Energy for your campaign?"

Going through a staffer: “Can I have 10 minutes with Cassie? We’d like to ask her to sign a pledge not to take money from Duke or Dominion.”

Be prepared to explain why Cassie should sign the pledge, and for the staff to take some time to discuss ramifications; and be prepared to follow up in a reasonable time (a day or a week).

Make sure to ask for **visual proof**.

ASK AT A FRIENDLY EVENT: Find a situation where Cassie will get applause for signing the pledge in front of a very friendly crowd. Some examples might be: Local hiking club / potluck gathering; monthly meeting of a progressive Democratic club or an anti-Citizens United rally. Bring the printed pledge, hand her a marker pen, and be polite. Politicians crave applause, and they have good instincts – they know that by signing the pledge they’ll get lots of applause from people who share their views, which will mean votes later. If she says yes, put the pledge in front of her, ask her to sign, and **livestream or take a picture**.

ASK AT A MULTI-CANDIDATE EVENT: Candidates are always looking for ways to distinguish themselves from their opponents – and there is no better forum for that than a forum with their opponents!

Get to the event early with friends. Some forums / debates require questions to go through a moderator, and others call on people raising hands. Bring the printed pledge.

Ask all the candidates to take the pledge, or ask one and challenge the others to match. “Cassie has already taken the pledge – will you, Debbie, and Elsie?”

You might want to lead off with a discussion of money in politics, e.g., get one or both candidates to say something about Citizens United, before asking the question.

Again, **livestream or take a picture** or it didn’t happen.

ASK AT A PETITION DELIVERY: You’ve collected signatures on a petition for a candidate who needs to know that voters in the district support the idea. Arrange a time for a petition delivery, prepare a short (1 to 2 minutes) speech along with the

petition signatures and the printed pledge, and bring a friend to **livestream or take pictures**.

HOW TO FOLLOW UP – DON'T FORGET THIS PART!

These three steps are essential:

- **DOCUMENT THE SIGNING:** First, make the most of the moment. **Take pictures** of them signing the pledge, holding the signed pledge, and of yourselves and her holding the pledge. **Livestream it**. Smile for the cameras. High-five each other. And take some pride in your accomplishment!
- **HAVE THE CANDIDATE SIGN THE OFFICIAL FORM:** Second, **quickly – before the candidate forgets – ask the candidate to fill out this form**. It should cover all the FAQs.
- **LET US KNOW:** Third, tell us – email us at info@notoxicmoney.org

Here are additional ways to follow up to build attention and momentum for your efforts:

Ask the signer if she'll **do a press release** on it (and if she has a Communications Director, get that person's contact info). Send the pictures you've taken to the candidate.

You can **ask the candidate to create a shareable image** – a favorite picture of herself such as a headshot, with the words of the pledge overlaid on the background. Why a meme in addition to the live-action picture? Most live-action pictures tend to be taken indoors with bad lighting; candidates want to present a professional image at all times, so if the candidate creates the meme then she controls her image, and then becomes more likely to publicize the image and the pledge.

Third, don't assume that the candidate will publicize on her own. You need to generate publicity. **Post on Facebook. Tweet it. Call local reporters.**

If you have managed to get all the candidates in a race on the same page in taking the same pledge, this deserves an extra round of publicity. Drop us a line at info@notoxicmoney.org and we'll publicize nationally.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If you have any questions that aren't answered below, email us at info@notoxicmoney.org

Why do local candidates matter? Isn't it really just the Congress, and governors who make a difference?

You might think that candidates for county supervisor, city council, port district, and similar municipal-level positions don't need to worry about toxic influence money. You would, unfortunately, be wrong. Duke Energy and Dominion Energy track every decision maker on every one of their projects, and if the decision makers are elected then these electric monopolies donate to them. And they know that today's city councillor may be tomorrow's state senator or governor. We need to get to candidates early to get them thinking about what's morally right and wrong and how to keep them accountable to the people of North Carolina.

How do I find out a candidate's next public appearance?

Often you can just call a campaign and ask for upcoming appearances. You can also sign up for their email and follow them on Facebook to keep informed of their public appearances.

I'm not familiar with petitions. How do I run a petition to convince a candidate to sign?

Sometimes waffling candidates need assurance that voters in the district care about the issues. You first convince Cassie the Candidate that a number of people in her district want her to take the pledge by circulating a petition, like the one found on our website. You can get signatures by circulating on Facebook, local blogs, and other internet means; printing out the petition and circulating it at local Democratic clubs, candidate forums, farmers markets, and similar places; and / or by posting on MoveOn.org, Change.org, and similar petition hosting sites. If you use pen-and-ink petition-gathering methods, make sure to collect legible email addresses and zip codes.

Some petition hosting sites, such as Petitions.MoveOn.org, will deliver the petition electronically but won't share all email addresses with you; others, like Change.org,

might charge for downloading signatures and leave the mechanics of petition delivery to you.

Use social media as an adjunct to your petition: Post tweets tagging @CassieCandidate, post on her Facebook page, post in Democratic/Republican clubs' Facebook groups and tag her.

Once you have a reasonable number of signatures – 100 signatures for a local race, 500 signatures for a Congressional race – you then need to do a petition delivery. Call the campaign office to arrange a time for a petition delivery, or plan to present the signatures at a candidate event. Print out the names and local zip codes – don't provide email addresses, please. Prepare a brief speech on why she should sign the pledge. Then show up with the printout and the pledge. And smile for the photos / livestream!

CANDIDATES' FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does signing the pledge specifically mean?

Taking the pledge means that a candidate's campaign will adopt a policy to not knowingly accept any contributions from Duke Energy and Dominion Energy's PACs, executives, lobbyists or affiliates.

Why should I take the pledge?

Fossil-fueled climate change is already harming Americans today – from extreme weather to higher food and energy bills to increased public health threats. The costs are borne by our families and our communities, destroying the American dream of shared prosperity and justice. Overcoming the climate emergency is the great moral imperative and opportunity of our time.

Toxic money is continuing to hinder bold action on climate change and perpetuate environmental destruction. Duke Energy and Dominion Energy have been blocking a swift transition to renewable energy while continuing to invest in unnecessary, unjust and unaffordable fossil fuel infrastructure projects like the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline. Both of these monopolies have corrupted our political system, funneling

millions of ratepayers' dollars into influence money that buys the favor of the state officials who are supposed to regulate them. According to campaign documents filed with the NC Board of Elections, over the past 10 years, top executives of Duke Energy and Dominion Energy and their political action committees have given a total of \$1,657,330 in campaign donations to current NC legislators. In exchange for their cash, these electric monopolies expect to receive billions in subsidies and friendly laws that enable them to continue polluting with impunity.

I believe that I can take money from any source, while maintaining my integrity and voting against them later. Are you saying I'm corruptible?

It's well established that electeds who take a lot of money from the electric monopolies vote with them far more often than electeds who don't. Last year's extended fight over NC Senate Bill 559 (SB-559)—a bill that would have given Duke Energy multi-year rate increases with less public accountability and oversight—exemplifies this pattern. According to campaign documents filed with the NC Board of Elections, the Senators who voted yes on SB 559 received ten times more in campaign contributions from Duke Energy than those voting no. And candidates who spend time soliciting money from Duke and Dominion – because it takes time to raise money – are choosing to listen to those donors rather than their constituents. Wouldn't you rather spend time with your voters – and avoid the appearance of corruption?

It's a competitive race and my opponents are taking money from everyone – why should I choose to place myself at a competitive disadvantage?

Begin by discussing the corrupting influence of money in politics, citing Citizens United, the Koch brothers, and any other examples you care to name. Then pivot to exploring any checks that she would return: Wal-Mart? Tobacco? Are electric monopolies any morally better than those?

Do I need to return past contributions from the Duke Energy or Dominion Energy?

The pledge is forward-looking in nature and won't apply to contributions received prior to Dec. 20th, 2019. If you have a history of golf outings with Duke and Dominion lobbyists, but are now wanting to sign the pledge, you will be applauded, not punished.

PLEDGE RESOURCES

The text of the pledge:

"I will take no money or gifts from Duke Energy, Dominion Energy, or their affiliates, including from their Political Action Committees (PAC), lobbyists, and executives. In addition, I support a moratorium on all of their new fossil fuel infrastructure projects."

Pledge sign-on sheet:

You can use our [our pre-made pledge sign-on sheet](#), optimized to fit onto a standard sheet of paper (print in landscape mode for best results) or make your own. Bring a fat marker (Sharpie or similar) with the pledge. We've found, sadly, that signatures made with ordinary ballpoint pens don't photograph well.

Social media:

- Use the hashtag #NoToxicMoneyNC
- **Website:** <https://notoxicmoney.org/>
- **Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/notoxicmoneync>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/No-Toxic-Money-NC-105068931077565/>