



FOX News: Environmentalists Accused of Using Tax Dollars to Sue Government



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HOST: “Every year, the government hands out millions to various green organizations to support their efforts to protect the environment, but what looks like a great idea may have a thornier side. Critics say the same environmentalists receiving the help are bleeding the government dry with mountains of lawsuits paid for by -- guess who? You. William La Jeunesse is live from Los Angeles. Alright - how many lawsuits are we talking about here, and how much do they cost?”

LAJEUNESSE: Well John, we’re talking hundreds of lawsuits and millions of dollars paid out in legal fees from your pocket. Let’s go to the graphic and I’ll show you some examples.

Wild Earth Guardians - they got \$140,000 from the federal government in a grant – and yet they sued the government 241 times.

The Natural Resources Defense Council - \$4 million from taxpayers, sued the government 488 times.

You add in the Center for Biological Diversity and the Sierra Club, that’s over 2000 cases in nine years.

Now, the group that put this stuff together, the Western Legacy Alliance, has come up with about \$10 million in legal fees in just a few courts with a few groups. Why does it happen?

Well, the government has a fund. It's called the Equal Access to Justice Act. Now private corporations could not recover, but if you are a nonprofit public interest groups, even if your budget like the Sierra Club is over \$50 million a year, they can collect. And in some cases we're talking \$650 an hour for their attorneys.

HOST: Unbelievable. What kinds of cases are we talking about?

LAJEUNESSE: Well, in some cases, they are very procedural. The government will settle a case. Sometimes they win. Even when they settle, we have to pay. Let me give you an example. A few years ago, the Center for Biological Diversity sued the CIA because they were not buying enough hybrid cars. We paid out in that case. Another one, in one month, the Forest Guardians filed petitions to list 700 endangered species. Now, the government has 90 days to respond to that with a scientific finding. It's a volume of paper. If they miss it by one day, they get sued, and you and I have to pay.

HOST: So, the environmentalists are winning a lot of these cases.

LAJEUNESSE: They are winning the cases, John. Sometimes they are paid if they lose, but it the government does not admit guilt but simply settles because they do not want to do it -- in one case, there was a Forest Service policy that they did not want to continue. Seven attorneys from environmental groups, five environmental groups, were paid \$500,000 because we didn't defend the policy but we didn't admit guilt.

Now, a Congresswoman from Wyoming, Cynthia Lummis said I need investigation. How much is being paid out of this Equal Access to Justice Fund and is it being abused because these groups, that fund was set up for poor individuals to recover when they sued the federal government. Not necessarily a \$100 million organization that files suit time and time again on what many consider frivolous or procedural – not substantive cases.

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