A year ago, Donald Trump was elected president. In the intervening months, we’ve seen a cascade of calamitous policies and events that have threatened our democracy, emboldened bigots and weakened environmental protections. Trump has also doubled down on fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas at a time when we must urgently move to clean, renewable energy to address the climate chaos ahead that threatens our access to safe food and clean water.

But make no mistake: WE, too, are doubling down — on the organizing that holds our elected officials accountable to people — and since we are uncompromised by corporate or government funding, we need YOUR help to mount a response that is commensurate to the threat. Whether it’s banning fracking, helping communities resist corporate control of their water, or fighting factory farms or industry attacks on food safety, we know that when we stand together, we can win.

This fall, disasters supercharged by climate change were felt coast to coast: devastating wildfires swept over the West, and historic hurricanes whipped through Texas, Florida and the Caribbean. Hurricane Maria and the ensuing response in Puerto Rico showed just how precarious our access to food, clean water

(continued on page 2)
Could the fruits and vegetables we eat be grown with toxic water from California oil fields? If you buy Halos Mandarins, Pom Wonderful juice or Wonderful pistachios and almonds, among other brands, the answer could be yes. That’s because Chevron and other oil companies sell water contaminated from drilling to four water districts in California’s Central Valley, where much of the country’s produce is grown. The districts mix it with fresh water and sell it to nearby farms.

Food & Water Watch has long demanded that these water providers stop selling this toxic water, which could be contaminated by carcinogens like ethylbenzene and other poisonous chemicals used in drilling. Now we want growers, like the Wonderful company, to refuse Chevron’s toxic water. So, we’re asking consumers to refuse to buy their products until they stop irrigating crops with the toxic water. Ultimately, it will be up to lawmakers to ban the practice. Find out more: https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/DontPolluteOurFruit

We Were Made for These Times (continued from page 1)

and sustainable energy can be in the face of these unnatural disasters. And low-income and minority communities will be hit the hardest, so we’re fighting for an equitable and just humanitarian response when disasters do happen.

Your support means everything, and allows us to stand strong in the face of cronyism and influence peddling, even at the highest levels. In September, we stood with Rep. Tulsi Gabbard to get the strongest federal climate change legislation EVER introduced, which mandates a just and swift transition to 100% clean, renewable energy by 2035 (starting with 80% in the next 10 years). Your support will help us organize around the visionary Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act (see sidebar, page 1), and amplify the voices of elected climate heroes across the country who are signing our pledge to move OFF Fossil Fuels.

These are difficult times because we are staring down what the future looks like if we don’t start to put people over profits. But we were made for these times, and with your help, we can work toward a future where ALL people have access to safe food, clean water and a livable planet.
Q&A with Rep. Tulsi Gabbard

Rep. Tulsi Gabbard recently introduced the Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act, the most comprehensive climate legislation to date. Food & Water Watch is proud to support this historic bill that would mandate a just and swift transition away from fossil fuels to 100% clean, renewable energy by 2035 (starting with 80% in the next 10 years). We caught up with Rep. Gabbard at the introduction of the OFF Act for a quick interview.

Food & Water Watch: Why did you introduce the OFF Act?

Rep. Gabbard: It only takes looking at our environment today to understand why the Off Fossil Fuels Act is so critical, and is urgently needed to pass. What this bill essentially does is provide a deadline and a goal to move our country off of fossil fuels to clean energy, 100%, by 2035. This is a comprehensive bill that looks at all the different aspects that are required to get our country to this goal, including making sure that we are providing support for workers who are currently in the fossil fuel industry to transition to a clean energy economy. That’s really what this is about: it’s a boost to our economy, it protects our planet, and it moves us toward a better future across the board.

Food & Water Watch: How can people get involved and help support the OFF Act?

Rep. Gabbard: The only way that this legislation is going to pass Congress is if people in every state across the country organize and make sure that their voices are heard to members of Congress about why this is so important. You can go to OffFossilFuels.org to get more information on exactly how to do that, and for more details on the legislation. But again, the critical thing is that your voice needs to be heard.

Food & Water Watch: What’s your message to all of Food & Water Watch’s supporters?

Rep. Gabbard: Food & Water Watch has been such a critical partner in getting this legislation crafted and introduced, and in really building the grassroots support around it, so Food & Water Watch is at the tip of the spear in this movement toward a clean energy future. Thank you for all your support — we have a big fight ahead of us. Let’s keep at it!

Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act (continued from page 1)

when we were dealing with multiple natural disasters (from raging Western wildfires to deadly and historic hurricanes in Texas, Florida and the Caribbean). Yet Trump and fossil fuel-funded members of Congress continue to support policies that fly in the face of climate science and the urgent need to move off fossil fuels.

To win on climate — which is essential to safeguarding food and water for future generations — we need to propel a bold agenda that centers on racial and economic justice. It cannot rely on false market solutions like carbon trading and taxing programs, which are simply corporate pay-to-pollute schemes. What we need is nothing short of a World War II-scale mobilization of our economy around a quick and just transition off fossil fuels and onto 100% renewable energy now.

Rep. Gabbard’s OFF Act is a critical step toward that mobilization. It places a moratorium on new fossil fuel projects, bans the export of oil and gas, and also moves our automobile and rail systems to 100% renewable energy. Additionally, it provides for a truly just transition for environmental justice communities and for those working in the fossil fuel industry.

The OFF Act is a critical first step in what must be a major national mobilization to restructure our energy system now. Visit www.offfossilfuels.org to get involved in your community and to join our national volunteer team.
SIGNIFICANT VICTORIES

1. We passed a ban on fracking in Maryland and moved a Republican governor to sign it into law. The victory — five years in the making — was a vindication of our strategy of fighting for bold initiatives and building strong grass-roots partnerships and coalitions to make real change.

2. We kept water public in Atlantic City. We partnered with allies there to beat back a Chris Christie-backed attempt to privatize the city’s water.

3. We stopped the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Working on the ground in key districts across the country, we partnered with environmental, labor, health and community organizations to block this disastrous trade deal.

4. We beat Nestlé in the Pacific Northwest. We worked in strong coalitions to block the corporation from placing a plant in Goldendale, Washington, and Gov. Brown of Oregon blocked a facility there following a nine-year battle.

Together with our allies at the national, state and local levels, and even in the face of a harsh national political climate, we accomplished some incredible victories in 2017.
5 We stopped fossil fuel infrastructure in New York. Working with allies across the state and building on our successful campaign to ban fracking in New York, we stopped the Northern Access pipeline and helped pass a bill with stronger regulations on transporting fracked oil on the Hudson River.

6 We blocked dirty power plants in California, beating back a proposed plant in Oxnard. We also blocked the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power’s plans to build and refurbish new gas-fired power plants.

7 We spearheaded opposition to Trump in the streets and in court, opposing plans to gut the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and suing him over his infrastructure scam.

8 We launched campaigns to stop factory farms, entering into lawsuits in five states to stop “ag gag” laws that criminalize whistleblower activities.

9 We blocked the Dirty Energy Bill from moving forward. Over the summer, we mobilized to stop this bill — which would fast-track natural gas exports and associated infrastructure — from moving in the Senate.

10 We helped introduce the strongest climate bill ever, working with allies and Rep. Tulsi Gabbard to introduce the Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act, which would move the nation to 100% renewable energy by 2035.
This is my fifth year working for Food & Water Watch, and I’m currently the Energy Policy Manager for the Climate and Energy Program. In addition to advocating for a just transition off fossil fuels, I help advocate for affordable public water for all.

Prior to being a federal lobbyist for Food & Water Watch, I practiced poverty law at the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, where I worked to provide low-income people access to services and resources through the civil justice system. Every day, I reflect on my experiences gained doing that work and apply it to the work we do here at Food & Water Watch to make sure that everyone has access to safe food, clean water and a healthy environment.

I am so proud to have found an organization that integrates my passion for fighting injustice with my passion for creating a better, more livable future — by first and foremost lifting up communities and empowering others to win local environmental and public health fights every day.

I am humbled to get to work on pushing forward federal legislation like the Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act (the OFF Act) and the Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity, and Reliability Act (the WATER Act). These bills represent the power of the people who make up our membership.

At the start of Florida’s legislative session this year, we came out strong with the re-introduction of fracking ban bills in the state House and Senate. The bills, both introduced by Republican legislators, came at a critical juncture in the state’s struggle to protect the drinking water of millions of Floridians. We know that stronger hurricanes are just part of the climate chaos ahead if we don’t move off fossil fuels, and now our message about fracking is finally hitting home with many of our elected officials in Florida.

At the same time, the fracking ban that we passed in Maryland officially went into effect this fall. The bill, also signed into law by a Republican, is a model for Florida and proves that a clean energy future can be bipartisan. As we continue to organize locally, grow people power and build political will, we’ll urge Florida leadership to step up and lead the fight to ban fracking in the Sunshine State once and for all.

In Her Own Words

Elizabeth Schuster
Energy Policy Manager

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Forbes recently named Costco to its list of the top 10 Fortune 500 companies most loved by liberals. Maybe that’s because Costco CEO Craig Jelinek has championed important causes like a livable wage and company-sponsored health benefits.

And yet, despite this commitment to social responsibility, Costco is about to venture into vertical integration and contract farming — a system that is the antithesis of fair. Why? Because Costco sells a lot of rotisserie chickens. So many, in fact, that the retail giant is planning to build its very own chicken slaughterhouse in Fremont, Nebraska, where it will slaughter 85 million chickens annually — or about 1.7 million per week.

Where will the chickens come from? Factory farms. And Costco is planning to sign up farmers under a contract growing system.

In a system of vertical integration (how almost all chicken is produced in the United States), the “integrator” (usually a company like Tyson or Perdue) delivers the chicks and feed and dictates farm operations through a contract. Integrators often require their growers to build and continually upgrade expensive barns to keep obtaining contracts. Farmers generally take out loans lasting more than a decade to pay for this expensive infrastructure, but the contracts are often flock-to-flock, meaning that a grower only has a guarantee of income for six or seven weeks at a time. The poultry sector is less like a free market than abject serfdom. Contracts are often unfair or abusive, and farmers often have no legal recourse against integrators.

Factory farms like the 100 contract farms that Costco plans to have raise its birds also produce a lot of waste, which is spread on farmland at levels far exceeding what is needed to fertilize crops. The new contract farms are likely to be constructed upstream from the cities of Lincoln and Omaha — and their drinking water supplies. But evidence of the problems that factory farms pose isn’t hard to find. Next door in Iowa, the Des Moines Water Works is in a years-long struggle to treat its water for nitrites discharged from the thousands of factory hog farms in counties upstream. And the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma sued upstream chicken producers in Arkansas for polluting its water, resulting in a legal battle that lasted for years.

Cheaper rotisserie chicken simply isn’t worth the cost of healthy drinking water for hundreds of thousands of people.

We’ve seen this again and again: Corporations, even ones that try to do well by consumers, workers and the environment, fall down when it comes to sourcing their products. But if Costco wants to live up to its progressive bona fides, factory farming isn’t the way to do it.

Shailene Woodley Praises Food & Water Watch’s Work in Marie Claire UK

In a recent issue of Marie Claire UK, actress and activist Shailene Woodley praised Food & Water Watch for helping “overlooked” communities with “legal platforms to stand up to the oil and gas industry.” Thanks for your support, Shailene!
Take Back the Tap: Five Years of Kicking Bottled Water Off Campuses

In this year’s Tap-a-palooza contest, Central Michigan University and the College of William & Mary topped the charts — collecting the most pledges among their campus community to choose tap over bottled water. The contest is a venue for students to educate their campus and mobilize other students to take action with the Take Back the Tap campaign. In total, students collected over 3,060 pledges to choose the tap.

**Tap-a-palooza Winner – Overall Pledges Collected**
A Food & Water Watch student organizer from Central Michigan University defeats the plastic water bottle monster! This year CMU won the Tap-a-palooza contest in the total overall pledge category, collecting over 1,030 pledges choosing tap over bottled water.

**Tap-a-palooza Winner – Per Capita Pledges Collected**
The College of William & Mary’s Take Back the Tap club poses with their campaign’s mascot Droppy! This is the second year in a row that the College of William & Mary wins the Tap-a-palooza contest in the per capita pledge category, collecting pledges from over 11% of their student body.

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**Become an activist!**
Want to see the latest ways you can help drive the movement to end corporate control and abuse of our food and water supplies? Visit our website at foodandwaterwatch.org/take-action

**Renew your membership!**
Your donation will help ensure that your food and water is safe and clean. Join us at foodandwaterwatch.org/give

**Make it political!**
Your non-tax-deductible donation will make possible our uncompromising lobbying and policy work in Washington, D.C. and in statehouses across the country. See more at foodandwateractionfund.org/give

**Already an activist and a member? Spread the word!**

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**To donate by mail:**
Please send your check made out to Food & Water Watch or Food & Water Action Fund and mail to:

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Food & Water Action Fund
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Washington, DC 20036

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