

Climate activists arrested outside CBS News headquarters in New York City

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The youth-led Sunrise Movement held a sit-in outside CBS News headquarters in New York City on October 1, 2024. (Photo: Sunrise Movement)

New York, October 3 (RHC)-- Just before the U.S. vice presidential debate on Tuesday, six members of the youth-led Sunrise Movement were arrested for blocking the street outside CBS News headquarters in New York City to demand that questions be asked of both candidates on what they would do to tackle the fossil fuel-driven climate emergency.

The sit-in and blockade came as the death toll from Hurricane Helene, which left a path of destruction across several southeastern states, hit at least 137. Sunrise has responded to the Category 4 storm with renewed calls to hold fossil fuel giants accountable.

"In North Carolina, I have watched buildings in my hometown be submerged in water, have seen entire towns washed away, trees and power lines covering the streets, people asking for help finding their loved

ones, and friends reaching out for aid after losing their homes and livelihoods," Talia Wilson of Asheville said in a Sunrise statement.

Wilson took aim at the Republican ticket of former President Donald Trump and Sen. JD Vance (R-Ohio), who faced his Democratic counterpart, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, in Tuesday night's debate on CBS television.

"It couldn't be clearer that we need to act. Big Oil has known for years that its actions would cause disasters like these, but JD Vance and Donald Trump keep promising Big Oil power in exchange for campaign contributions," the 18-year-old campaigner said. "I know my friends and neighbors want to hear from both candidates on how they plan to address the climate crisis and work to prevent even worse disasters from striking our communities in the future."

Sunrise's Jordan Reif said that "my mom sent me pictures from our family in Georgia. Hurricane Helene destroyed roads, yards, and homes. There was damage like we had never seen before."

"The climate crisis is worsening and climate denier politicians like JD Vance are selling out our communities for donations from Big Oil," the 24-year-old added. "CBS News and the media must report Hurricane Helene for what it is—Big Oil's greed destroying our communities."

Sunrise is circulating a petition that notes Big Oil-backed Vance's response to the death and devastation. In a Saturday social media post, the Republican said: "Please say a prayer for everyone affected by the storms."

The petition says, "Sign this letter to demand that CBS News anchor and vice presidential debate moderator Norah O'Donnell add a question to Tuesday's debate asking JD Vance if his prayers outweigh the millions he takes from Big Oil to deny the climate crisis."

Vance's climate and energy views took a 180 once he was running for the Senate. The oil and gas industry spent more than \$283,000 on Vance's 2022 campaign—more than they gave to all but 18 other members of Congress, according to the campaign finance watchdog OpenSecrets.

Trump's selection of Vance as his VP candidate alarmed green groups that are overwhelmingly backing Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris and Walz, given the Republican ex-president's pledge to roll back Biden-Harris administration climate policies if Big Oil pours just \$1 billion into his campaign, and research showing planet-heating pollution would soar if he returned to the White House.

"Donald Trump and JD Vance are responding to the unimaginable devastation of Helene by tweeting prayers and by doubling down on their climate denial. That's wholly unacceptable," said Sunrise communications director Stevie O'Hanlon, whose group is working to mobilize 1.5 million swing state voters in support of Harris.

"Scientists have been extremely clear: Climate change made Helene stronger and more deadly, and if we don't urgently act, storms like this will become the new normal," O'Hanlon added.

[SOURCE: COMMON DREAMS / <https://www.commondreams.org/>]

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