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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF STATE-LEVEL POLITICAL CORRUPTION: FOSSIL FUEL DOLLARS

Leading climate activists and thought leaders join together in a discussion about the extraordinary impact of the fossil fuel industry on state-level government corruption, highlighting two recent examples: Ohio's House Bill 6 and the cracker plant in Monaca, Pennsylvania.

On Thursday, October 16, 2020 at 7 p.m. EST/4 p.m. PST, the State of American Democracy Project—a nonpartisan collective of acclaimed thought leaders, journalists, political leaders, and theologians founded by northeast Ohio native, David W. Orr, Ph.D., environmental activist and professor emeritus at Oberlin College—will stream the next episode of “Democracy Unchained: A Conversation Series” on Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, Roku and Fire TV.

This fifth episode in the series, “Democracy v. Fossil Fuels” discusses how fossil fuel dollars shape policies and programs through bribes and other lobbyist dollars, creating an environmentally destructive government. Nick Rathod, founder and former executive director of the State Innovation Exchange (Six)—designed to be a counter-organization to ALEC—says, “... there's about 128,000 bills that get passed every year in state legislatures [...] so it's really where day-to-day people get impacted by policymaking.” Rathod continued to emphasize that in comparison to Congressional policymaking, state government creates policies that most impact the average citizen, and a lot of these policies are largely influenced by corporate dollars, including the fossil fuel industry.

Conversation partners in the fifth episode of “Democracy Unchained: A Conversation Series,” include:

Leah Stokes, Professor at University of California, Santa Barbara, and author of *Short Circuiting Policy*

Nick Rathod, Founder and Former Executive Director of the State Innovation Exchange (Six)

Crystal M.C. Davis, Vice President of Policy and Strategic Engagement, Alliance for the Great Lakes

Sean O’Leary, Senior Researcher, Ohio River Valley Institute

Larry Schweiger, Chair, Climate Reality Action Fund, and author of *The Climate Crisis and Corrupt Politics*

Randi Pokladnik, Environmental Activist

Chris Quinn, Editor, *The Plain Dealer* and Cleveland.com

Heather Taylor-Miesle, Executive Director, Ohio Environmental Council (OEC)

Dan Moulthrop, Chief Executive Officer, The City Club of Cleveland

David Orr, professor emeritus, Oberlin College, and founder of the State of American Democracy project.

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About the State of American Democracy Project

The State of American Democracy initiative began with a conference at Oberlin College in 2017, with a goal to clarify the historic and institutional origins of the election of 2016 and the breakdown in governance, civility, and fairness that transcends party politics. The second phase of the work through the election of 2020 focuses on repairing and strengthening democratic institutions to serve the aims of justice, fairness, prosperity, and resilience.

Today, the State of American Democracy is a nonpartisan collective of individuals and organizations from across the country who are passionate about rebuilding politics and government in America for the benefit of all Americans. *Democracy Unchained*, the book, edited by David W. Orr, Andrew Gumbel, Bakari Kitwana and William S. Becker (New Press, March 2020), brings together more than 30 contributors, and “Democracy Unchained: A Conversation Series” brings together more than 100 thought leaders from a variety of disciplines. Today, more than 50 organizations have also partnered and/or sponsored this project, as well.

The State of American Democracy project is made possible through the generous support of Ford Foundation, Germeshausen Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, Wallace Global Fund, Park Foundation, and Kallopeia Foundation.

To learn more, visit stateofamericandemocracy.org.