

## RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 264 TRANSCRIPT

**Steve Skrovan:** Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host David Feldman. Hello, David, in this post-Mueller world.

**David Feldman:** Yeah. We have Walter Hang and listener questions today. It's a great show, but I wanted to find out what Ralph thought of the Mueller Report - or the Barr Report.

**Ralph Nader:** David, the Mueller Report was flawed from the start. Everybody agrees that the Russians interfered in our election in a whole variety of ways, and they preferred Trump over Clinton. So all Trump had to do was just accept it, accept this foreign largesse and not conspire or collude. But the mission of the Mueller Report was to see if he did conspire or collude, which means they have to find intent. So what does Mueller do? He doesn't interview his main subject, Donald Trump. And then after 25 million dollars-worth of report, he doesn't have any legal recommendations. He doesn't recommend anything about obstruction of justice or self-dealing business, nothing. So, it was a giant flat tire and all that remains now is for the report to be published in full for the American people. There are a lot of publishers ready to put it out in paperback and all the Democrats have to do is say that Donald Trump himself said, before the Mueller Report was released, that it should be given in total to the American people and made public. And on top of that, there was a 420 to zero vote in the House that means all the Republicans and the Democrats, over a week ago, saying that the Mueller Report should be made public in its entirety.

**Steve Skrovan:** All right, well thanks for that Ralph. As David mentioned, we've got Walter Hang on the show. And I'm excited about today's show because it's been a long time since we had Walter on the show and everybody should have a Walter Hang in their community. Walter Hang lives in Ithaca, New York where he runs Toxics Targeting, an environmental consulting firm that has compiled detailed information on over 7000 known and potential toxic sites throughout New York State. This is the guy who should be the head of the EPA. He is a tireless activist and advocate for the environment who first came to national attention in the '80s when he and Phil Donahue rode on a garbage barge that was floating up in town the Atlantic Seaboard looking for a place to dump its trash. We're going to find out about Walter's latest adventures taking on the corporate and government entities that try to dump all sorts of toxic substances in your neighborhood. And after spending most of the hour with Walter, we're going to burst open the mail bag and take more of your listener questions. Of course, somewhere in between, we will, as always, hear from another tireless advocate you know so well, our Corporate Crime Reporter Russell Mokhiber who's always sticking it to the man, but first, let's get to Walter.

**David Feldman:** Walter Hang is the founder of Toxics Targeting, an environmental consulting firm in Ithaca, New York that helps people understand toxic sites through New York State. He produces all sorts of maps, data, reports, and publishes research with his team to help engineers, environmental

consulting firms, drinking water suppliers, and home buyers to investigate toxic hazard concerns. Walter and his company were instrumental in the fight to ban fracking from New York State. Welcome back to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Walter Hang.

**Walter Hang:** Thanks so much for inviting me.

**Ralph Nader:** Welcome again, Walter. The listeners would like to know the way you advocate. In your words, you say you just use the classic . . . I'm quoting. "The classic campaign model, data research number 1; public policy advocacy, number 2; grassroots coalition organizing, number 3; and media outreach, number 4 to achieve stunning victories in New York that are unsurpassed anywhere else in the nation." You also say, "big green groups, those are the big environmental groups, waste billions of dollars while doing virtually nothing to stop President Trump from dismantling the federal government's critical public health and environmental protection programs. Those failures must not be tolerated." Who are you talking about and what have you said to them directly?

**Walter Hang:** You know I can start at the top, Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy, you name it. I mean Fred Krupp, who I was an intern with at the Environmental Defense Fund 40 years ago, was in Ithaca and, yeah, I gave him a little bit of a hard time as, you know, basically, what do you do with all that money? I mean it's like billions of dollars that these groups get from their members because they promise the moon and the stars. We're fighting tooth and nail. We're battling President Trump. We're making sure that climate change is being addressed. And the truth of the matter is, they take all the money; they have splendid offices; they have lots of staff, but they're not fighters anymore. And the bottom line is, they're not effective. For example, let's look at shale fracking. So maybe 10 years ago, shale fracking was being proposed in Pennsylvania and in New York. And even Robert F. Kennedy Jr., said "Oh, fracked gas will be a bridge fuel to the future," right? So, the theory was, we would only use fracked gas for a little bit of time until we reached wind and solar nirvana. Well what he failed to tell the public is that once you build that massive infrastructure to extract the gas out of the so-called Marcellus shale in the northeast, so you drill down and through the shale formation and the gas is present in tiny pores. So you pressurize a fluid and pump it into this bore hole and it cracks the shale. And this allows the gas to come out of the rock and it gets collected. So, the cost of shale fracking is so ginormous. And then the infrastructure to build the transmission pipelines to get it to market, to store it, to power plants, you know and so forth and so on, that's a 40- to 50-year financial, you know, amortization requirement. And so all they do is talk big about how we're all going to be on sustainable energy and then they fail to stop shale fracking. The grassroots organizers that I worked with 24/7 in New York, ultimately succeeded in making our state the only one in the nation with shale that could be fracked and we decided we're not going to frack it. So, to this day, New York has never fracked a single production well. Meanwhile, fracking is spread coast to coast. Meanwhile America is now the biggest oil and gas producer on the planet, and at the same time, these environmental groups still go on, promising all these things that are not happening.

**Ralph Nader:** Walter, what do you think is the problem, bureaucracy? They have the capability; they have far more people than you. They have more lawyers, and they have outsourced their fundraising which, of course, ruptures their ability to have grassroot coalition unlike Lois Gibb's group, which has grassroot efforts all over the country. What do you think the problem is? Is it that they're paid too much? Fred Krupp apparently is paid just under \$1 million a year as head of the Environmental Defense group. They're too cushy with companies like McDonald's? Give us your analysis. It's not just the lack of a fighting spirit. What's the cause of the lack of the fighting spirit?

**Walter Hang:** I think that the bottom line is that the problem is beyond dispute; it's plain as day. When Environmental Defense Fund - not to pick on Fred too much because he's very capable as we all know - when they started out, they were practically communists. They were suing everyone. They hired people with incredible fighting spirit, and they just were like a house on fire as you were at the same time. And then the difference is, over the course of the years, they finally began to care about raising more and more, more money. And they couldn't raise money as effectively if they were constantly kicking the crap out of giant corporate polluters. And so that's how come, I believe, that the environmental pollution cleanup movement dwindled. And then the environmental movement became a sustainable energy movement. Then you could promise the moon and the stars, 100% sustainable, and never have to fulfill it, never have to get your hands dirty, engaged in brutal grassroots political fights. And so that's how come now they're really propaganda machines. They tell their members how they're just working so hard, but the truth of the matter is, they have virtually no victories to show for all the money that's been spent and that's because they don't really care that much about winning and losing and that's the difference with New York, is that we had our homes, our state, our heritage to defend from shale fracking and that's what we succeeded in doing.

**Ralph Nader:** All right, Walter - we're talking with Walter Hang who is the founder and head of Toxics Targeting in Ithaca, New York. Part of it is, once you want to raise money, you don't just want to raise money in 50 or 25-dollar increments; you want to raise big money. So that means you go to foundations whose boards are heavily corporate lawyers, corporate consultants, and you start getting members on your own board that are very wealthy and they have good public sentiments but they don't really mean it. What you're talking about is fire in the belly. You really mean it. You're on the ground. So, describe how you and others mobilized to get Governor Cuomo of New York to basically put a ban on fracking throughout the entire State of New York. And by the way, listeners, fracking is not just more global warming gases; it's not just a mess that they create. Fracking requires the pumping of water with chemicals to liberate the gas in the shale as Walter pointed out. And it's beginning to contaminate underground drinking water. And people in Pennsylvania are beginning to get sick from the pollution. Also, they're beginning to be swindled on the royalty agreements that one-sided, fine-print royalty agreements that these farmland owners had to sign. So, start us through now, where was the NRDC on New York and shale, and then what did you and others do? Because our listeners are looking for victories and this is a great victory; give it a time frame too.

**Walter Hang:** The Natural Resources Defense Council was like all the other entities. They were basically saying they were going to battle this problem and then they would litigate, if heaven forbid, shale fracking was permitted. And one key philanthropic entity really believed in NRDC and had provided enormous funding. And then one day, John Adams, the Executive Director of NRDC said "You're not going to believe the public education efforts that we're making." And suddenly the light bulb went off in this person's head and she realized that they were not going to fight to the death and that's when I got a call. So, what Toxics Targeting did, and by the way, we compile information, not on 7000 sites, but on more than 850,000 known and potential toxic sites including more than 300,000 spills and leaking tanks, many of which were associated with oil and gas extraction, which began in New York State in 1821. So, people can go to [toxicstargeting.com](http://toxicstargeting.com) and click on the Marcellus Shale Campaign and look at that information.

**Ralph Nader:** Where do you get this data? Listeners are probably saying, "Where in the world, Walter Hang, do you get all this information?"

**Walter Hang:** I get it through Freedom of Information by simply writing letters to the local, state and federal authorities. It's all government information. And because we're a democracy, because government depends on citizens being educated, aware, civically engaged, the information isn't copyrighted, right? because we need an educated body of citizenry to make good decisions.

**Ralph Nader:** Walter, if somebody wants to buy a house, they can go to Toxics Targeting and say, are there any toxic waste pits or dumps anywhere near here? Is there a flow of polluted water in a brook underneath the land? Or if they want to build a school or if they want to build an athletic playground, you can give them that information in how many states?

**Walter Hang:** Unfortunately, I can only do it in New York and sometimes in New Jersey, portions in New Jersey. But Ralph, my company is so unbelievably unique. We actually allow people to look at a free map called the Homebuyer Beware Map, and you can type in your address and you're exactly right, you can check to see if the home you're thinking about buying is near toxic dump, has a leaking tank. You can check to see, for example, if your kid goes to Elmira High School, whether or not it's toxic polluted, and it is. It's the sight of a 100-year manufacturing facility. The football field was actually a hazardous waste site. And this is where they made the Norden bombsight in World War II. So, people are living in communities that the environmental groups oftentimes implied, you know, the problems had been solved; there were no more issues to be concerned about. And that's simply not true. And so, when shale fracking came to New York, New York State actually said, "All of our existing regulations are fine. We've been doing oil and gas extraction for decades and decades and we've never had problems. We just need to supplement those regulations." And so they initiated the supplemental generic environmental impact statement proceeding. Now you and I have both been around the track and when someone says we've never had pollution problems with one of the heavy duty-est industrial activities on the planet, I'm a little bit skeptical. And so, the rule is trust, but verify. And so I went to look. And I sifted

through 30,000 spills and I found incredible fires, explosions, massive wastewater discharges that had never been cleaned up. And so the truth of the matter is, the State of New York was not exactly telling the truth. They weren't being honest with the public and so I told Tom Wilber at the Press & Sun-Bulletin, and basically, he wrote a huge article that ran all over the Southern Tier of New York and in Ithaca and it said, "The state's depiction of a well regulated industry just got a shot of mock in the eye." And then I wrote a letter to the Governor, David Paterson at the time, and said I want you to stop this supplemental generic environmental impact statement preceding; send it back to the drawing board, and adopt comprehensive regulations to make sure that public health and the environment will be protected. And we fought tooth and nail, day and night, until ultimately, we got more than 10,000 signatories to that original coalition letter. We kept documenting more problems. I went out into the field. I found oil lagoons that were just dripping with toxics into tributaries, for example, to the Genesee River. And by throwing more documentation fuel on the fire, we just eventually fought this to a standstill. And then in the ensuing four years, we rolled it back, and that's how we required Governor Andrew Cuomo to adopt the prohibition on all shale fracking in the State of New York and, you know, it's holding firm so far, but we're not accepting that this deal is done and over with. We're watching him like a hawk because he could change his mind at any time.

**Ralph Nader:** Well let's look at it from Andrew Cuomo's point of view. He was probably ready to do what the governor of Pennsylvania, the governor of Texas, you know, just open the flood gates, have these salesmen go to the farmlands, sign people up with the fine-print, deceptive contracts--reassure them that things are okay when they're not okay once fracking gets underway, don't worry; we've done it all the time, safely. In other words, they were lying and deceiving them. The huge trucks were coming, ripping up the rural roads, etcetera. So, Cuomo is saying, hey, this is a new resource for New York State; it'll create jobs. So, he was inclined to give the okay and exactly why do you think his politically attuned mind changed and he supported the ban on fracking in New York State? Start with that.

**Walter Hang:** So, the first thing is, you are exactly right. He said it plain as day that he supported shale fracking as an economic concern, right? It was going to generate jobs. But then he said that all watersheds are sacrosanct and he wouldn't allow it unless it could be done safely. And so, we knew, as reported by The New York Times, that he was going to allow it along the border with Pennsylvania--these very poor, very economically distressed areas, and he was going to safeguard areas basically like the New York City watershed, which was maybe potentially in the area where there could be fracking and other areas where basically wealthier interests were located, notably Ithaca and Cooperstown. And then we basically just battered him into submission. He held on for years trying to go forward with fracking. If he, in his heart of hearts didn't want fracking, he could have avoided literally years of getting pounded. I mean, my motto was we were going to birddog him in every community where he showed his face. And that's exactly what we did. We just hammered him in the press. We hammered him with coalition letters that were excruciatingly detailed. We got press, more press, and still more press until ultimately he could not go forward. And so, he tried to buy off the big environmental groups--EDF, NRDC. They were all on this advisory committee for shale fracking, but the activists were working so hard they were in a frenzy. And we had educated them; we had told them how to echo key requests. So

we wanted to send the Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement back to the drawing board. We wanted it done properly and that is why we ultimately prevailed. And citizens in other states could have replicated those efforts--except they just said, "We want a ban". They didn't provide any rationale for why there should be a ban. They watched movies. They blogged. And that's how come they got crushed. In New York, because they had someone like me telling them exactly what they should do, they couldn't make things up on their own. We were able to succeed. And that's how come the victory in New York was absolutely unprecedented.

**Ralph Nader:** Walter, give our listeners an idea of how many real activists there were that were mobilized with you around the state and who these people were, because I keep saying, program after program, it's easier than we think to turn things around if you had 1%, sometimes a lot less, of really committed people who know what they're talking about, who know where the decisions have to be changed--legislature, governor's office, and who have people on their side--majority public opinion. I mean, cancer, respiratory disease, poisoned soil, contaminated food; the word toxic is like a deadly radiating sequence into people's lives and health of their children, drinking water, you name it. So give us an idea how many pulled this off with you.

**Walter Hang:** Number one, the most important thing is we had thousands and thousands of the most amazingly dedicated activists. And you know better than almost anyone, people want to get involved, they don't really know what to do, right? And so, they say basically I want to be Ralph Nader, right? And that's why you established the Public Interest Research Groups, the citizen action groups, and that in effect is what I did. So, I would meet activists. I would meet, for example, Karen Glauber; I just love her to death. She was a speech therapist near Binghamton. And I met her, and I met Elaine Perkus. And she was an aroma therapist. And I love telling people that in many ways, shale fracking was stopped in New York State because of an aroma therapist and a speech therapist. And it's true! And they were with a group called New York Residents Against Drilling, NYRAD. And so, they would help me hold news events in Binghamton. Binghamton, New York was the epicenter of the proposed fracking revolution. It's right north of the border of Pennsylvania. It's in the Marcellus Shale Region. And the reason that we were choosing to fight it out there is because another amazing advocate that I met was Matt Ryan. And he is the Mayor of Binghamton. He's a native Binghamtonian. He stayed, he fought, and he really helped us. So, we had more news conferences with NYRAD and me and others than you can shake a stick at. Another amazing activist, Erin Heaton. She literally showed up at my door one day and she's a librarian in Westchester County. And so, I would meet these people and I would introduce them to, for example, Barbara Lifton, who is the totally unsung hero of the shale fracking fight. Why? This Assembly Representative organized the Democratic Conference in the Assembly. And they said this is bad for Upstate New York. She introduced me to Cathy Nolan, who until recently was Chair of the Education Committee, and she didn't think that it was a good thing in downstate because it could threaten New York City's drinking water. So I had a meeting with her in her democratic club in Queens, New York, and they became rabid anti-frackers. So, you know you've got to hit the road. You've got to go to meetings. You've got to meet people. You've got to educate them; you've got to activate them. And they all have to say the same thing. You can't be running around, you know, just babbling about anything that comes into their heads. And that request, that the Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement be

withdrawn and sent back to the drawing board, that's the key strategy that ultimately won. And then right after we got this decision, we were shocked to find out that the decision only focused on hydro-fracking, fracking with water. You can frack also with what's called gelled propane. So we went right back into the trenches. We fought it out again, and we killed the proposed gelled propane fracking project in Barton, New York. And so, we've remained vigilant and I think that recognition that we almost got bamboozled by the governor, because when I was asked about this, I went to look for the definition of high-volume hydraulic fracking in the decision and I couldn't find it, and then I found it in a footnote. And I was like, God, I am totally paranoid that I'm not paranoid enough. And so what I did then was I took that list of 10,000 activists who I'd sent hundreds of alerts to and then we focused on the root cause of how to end the addiction to fossil fuels in New York State and that was to make sure that no fossil fuel infrastructure projects could be permitted by the State of New York and this would keep the fracked gas hopefully out of New York. And so now, those same activists have been instrumental in killing nearly 5 billion dollars-worth of transmission pipelines, gas storage facilities, and it's just an unbelievable achievement! And it shows exactly what you would tell students when I used to listen to you--that you can derive enormous satisfaction by being civically engaged, by becoming a local leader. If you believe that your community is worth fighting for, you can safeguard it from toxic pollution, shale fracking, fossil fuel infrastructure, giant compressor stations. It's just not that hard; you just need coaching and that's what I provide.

**Ralph Nader:** We're talking with Walter Hang, Founder and Head of Toxics Targeting in Ithaca, New York. Walter, clearly, you didn't have to go through the legislature. You worked the regulatory agencies in the State of New York, but were the oil and gas lobbyists trying to work the legislature to overrule these agencies when they begin to do the right thing? And were there public hearings that helped you?

**Walter Hang:** Of course. So, number one, we knew we couldn't, I knew we couldn't get any protections through the state legislature because the State Senate, at the time, was controlled by Republicans, who were rabidly pro-fracking because they have a lot of representatives in Upstate New York. That's where their leadership is and then that's how come they wanted fracking. So I knew that was dead as a doornail. To correct you a little bit, we never went after the Department of Environmental Conservation because we knew that when Andrew Cuomo took over after David Paterson left office, that he was a micromanager of the highest level and that he made all of the decisions himself. So, when I met with the former Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis, who I knew for decades, he had always supported my bills when I was a public interest troublemaker, he said, "Don't come after me, go after the governor". And that's how come we focused with laser precision on Andrew Cuomo the whole time. But we knew that citizens need the support of elected officials. We knew that they were essential to thwart the lobbying efforts of the oil and gas industry and that's how come we work very, very closely with key legislators. Notably the leadership was provided by Barbara Lifton, with Shelly Silver, and then we had very, very important members of the senior conference and they really helped us. Without them, we never would've prohibited shale fracking in New York.

**Ralph Nader:** Okay. Before we get to your great project on energy efficiency, creating jobs street by street so to speak, just briefly tell us about holding the government accountable for failure to clean up these algal blooms that threatened the drinking water for more than 10 million New Yorkers last year.

**Walter Hang:** So, this is a classic case of how my campaign at [toxicstargeting.com](http://toxicstargeting.com), people can go look at how we fought harmful algal blooms. This is a classic case of a problem kind of appearing; it was related to our efforts to protect water quality and we jumped right on it. So what is a harmful algal bloom? This is when what are called cyanobacteria are living in a lake or a river or body of water, coastal water, for example, and there's too much nutrient available. So, in fresh water, if you have too much phosphorus, which is growth limiting, then these amazing harmful algal blooms can just blossom. They can just explode. In a day, you can suddenly see this huge pea-soup, pollution problem across an entire lake, for example, Cayuga Lake, which is where I live in Ithaca. And in salt water, the growth limiting factor is nitrogen. So, the problem is, that the Federal Water Pollution Control Act amendments have never been enforced properly. So, the Clean Water Act, which is what it's called now, has all kinds of provisions to limit this stormwater runoff, manure, to try to make sure that all these bodies of water are fishable and swimmable. Those are the requirements. But for 40 years, those requirements have not been enforced. And so, in New York in 2017, suddenly these HABs started exploding across Upstate New York, in Cayuga Lake, and then ultimately in Skaneateles Lake, which is the very, very thought-to-be pristine Finger Lake. And a local council representative from Auburn, New York, Terence Cuddy and I just went right after the governor. Terry Cuddy represents Auburn, New York where 45,000 people get their drinking water from Owasco Lake. And Owasco Lake had some of the worst harmful algal blooms. They came within a hair of not being able to provide public drinking water to those residents. And so, he and I got huge press coverage. Governor Cuomo's stooge, Matt Marko at the Department of Environmental Conservation office in Syracuse, wrote me a letter in response to a very detailed coalition letter saying "Well, only 12% of our waters are impaired by HABs. We have a wonderful program. Everything is just going to be fine." And we phone banked the governor like a thousand calls a day. We just tortured him everywhere he went. And again, we had elected officials; we had leading citizen groups, and within three months, the governor proposed to cough up 65 million dollars to deal with these harmful algal blooms in only 12 impaired water bodies. And so, we said to everyone else, what are you, chopped liver? How come you have to wait and you don't get enforcement of the law and these lakes are supposed to get enforcement of the law. That's just fundamentally unfair. And so, we've just whipsawed the governor on this issue. Last year I documented immense manure problems that had never been curtailed all across the State of New York. The manure has phosphorus and nitrogen. So when you dump manure into a body of water, it's just like you pour fertilizer on your lawn, you get more vegetable matter. And so I documented up to seven to 10 million gallons of manure in a single incident. I documented just massive spills that the state had never curtailed. And that's how you hold government accountable. You show them the letter and the spirit of the law. You document with their own data how they haven't met the requirements of the law, and then you organize the citizens to phone bank the powers that be to show up at events and to help generate press coverage to basically make sure that these problems are dealt with. And that's how you generate change.



**Ralph Nader:** In addition to requiring, you're pushing the government to hold the polluters liable for cleaning up what are called the Legacy Toxic Sites. It should have been cleaned up decades ago. You have an interesting model; Toxics Targeting is an environmental business. You're not a nonprofit. You don't have to be harassed for lobbying. You're free. How many models like that are around the country? Are there any small businesses like yours who were also ferocious, environmental advocates based on the data that they get for the business?

**Walter Hang:** None that I know of.

**Ralph Nader:** Okay, well, you have two new initiatives, which we could spend a whole hour on this, but the whole business with toxic gases, global warming, you name it, carbon dioxide...

**Walter Hang:** Well first, let me talk a little bit about Legacy Toxic Sites and the per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. This is the Teflon pollution that's really garnering a lot of attention these days. So, what I proved in the last couple years is that the State of New York and the federal authorities don't enforce toxic cleanup requirements at ancient landfills, garbage dumps, industrial sites. So, we talked about Elmira High where toxic pollution reported 40 years ago has never been cleaned up. And then it was revealed that the football field is actually a hazardous waste site. And then it was revealed that people had very high testicular rates of cancer. So that still didn't result in the site being cleaned up. And I've now documented more than a thousand of these sites all over the State of New York where the regulatory authorities haven't enforced cleanup standards. And many of them were in Ithaca. In little Ithaca, New York, I've now driven about 70 million dollars- worth of cleanup of manufactured gas plants, industrial sites, leaking tanks and the like. Just by documenting the problem, I point in my news conference to the data field that says "meets cleanup standards," no. And then we generate press.

**Ralph Nader:** You know listeners outside of New York shouldn't think that New York State is unusual here. The Poisoning of America by corporations has been going on for decades and decades. Actually, that was a title of a book, Who's Poisoning America? by Ron Brownstein and John Richard that we put out years ago. So listeners, don't think that New York is the only toxic cesspool here. All of these toxic sites are all over the country. And if there are more Toxics Targeting firms like Walter in other states, you could really have a terrific service here. Because when the real estate industry realizes that they're not going to do much business anywhere near all these toxic sites and suddenly become revealed and documented, maybe they'll start to put the pressure on as well. In the minutes we have, give us your new initiative on what you call is to squash the fossil fuel industry by minimizing consumption of coal oil, fracked gas used for energy production. This is efficiency, energy conservation, efficiency, huge potential. Tell our listeners.

**Walter Hang:** Let me just first mention that I've been going around compiling data in other states now for these P-phos pollutants. So I've been looking at New Jersey, Connecticut, North Carolina, Florida,

Louisiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Colorado, and California. And so this is a contaminant that showed up originally in Hoosick Falls, New York and they couldn't drink their water. And now New York is in the process of adopting an incredibly low amount of 10 parts-per-trillion of two kinds of these very common toxic chemicals that were used in firefighting foam, they're used to make nonstick cookware, so I've been talking to county officials from all over the country on behalf of a law firm that originally helped me protect drinking water in New York from MTBE, Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether. Now Napoli Shkolnik (Law Firm) is working with communities all across the country from coast to coast on this P-phos issue. So they can go to Napoli Shkolnik's website and learn more about what's going on in their communities. And I hope that the maps that I've been making will soon appear.

**Ralph Nader:** Give the website again. In the few minutes we have left, get into the energy efficiency initiative.

**Walter Hang:** Yup. It's Napoli Shkolnik and their phone number is 844-230-7676 and they were leaders in protecting New York from drinking water contamination caused by MTBE. So my biggest initiative these days is to try to basically strangle the fossil fuel industry in New York. And we want to do that by stopping the use of oil, coal, and fracked gas. And we aim to achieve this by launching the biggest insulation, weatherization, and energy efficiency program in the country. And this is how we're going to do it. New York State has about 5 billion dollars in a clean energy fund. Now this was supposed to promote wind and solar and offshore facilities and things like that, but those are not very effective from a cost perspective. And so the money is simply not being spent. So what I want to do is I want to take half of that dedicated clean energy fund, say two billion. And then what I want to do is I want to allow homeowners to retrofit their homes for 2500 bucks. And I want the state to kick in 2500 bucks. So right now in Upstate New York, you can retrofit your residential home for about 10 grand. But I believe with economies of scale, you can knock it down to 5000 dollars. And so if the homeowner pays half, New York State pays half, we'll get two amazing benefits. Number one: after three years, the homeowner can kill off this debt and then they can pocket 800 bucks a year, because they can save about a third of their utility bill; average utility bill in Upstate New York about 2400 dollars a year. The benefit for New York State is that you could generate literally tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of jobs for people to retrofit the homes. And so, you could just literally go to a community like Ithaca, New York, and you could retrofit all 10,000 housing units in a matter of you know, maybe 10 years. And you could do this all across New York. And the beauty of my proposal is that the homeowners don't have to front any money. They pay for it through on-bill mechanisms that are already established with the utilities. So the utilities pay the contractors, and then that debt is killed off only through energy savings, because we know you can save about a third. So the utility bills can't go up for the rate payers. And then after three years, they've eliminated their debt; they pocket 800 bucks. And so, there's no tax that goes into some till and they don't know whatever happens to it and this could generate jobs. And this could be replicated anywhere in the country. Because we know that when the first oil crisis hit, the first thing that we tried to do was to conserve energy, right? You can save 10% of your utility bill by simply installing a programmable thermostat. They cost like 15 dollars. You could save that in a couple of months. The problem is people don't know how to program them, right? There are a lot of elderly people; there are a lot of people not good with machines. So what's the solution? You get the meter readers on behalf of

the utilities to program them or you can install more sophisticated units that can be programmed from offsite. But we have to require the utilities to do this. And then instead of talking endlessly about how terrible climate change is and how terrible fossil fuel burning is, we can actually do something about it. And I don't see any reason why in New York State we can't use available funds to basically slash fossil fuel consumption by a third. And almost all of the energy produced in New York is not sustainable.

**Ralph Nader:** Walter, we've got to leave in just a minute. But I want you to just discuss this firefighting foam and toxic Teflon pollution that plagues communities in every state of the union as you said. And then give your website for Toxics Targeting.

**Walter Hang:** Okay. So this P-phos pollution is incredibly widespread. It's about 3000-plus compounds. They're very obscure. They're fluorinated compounds; they're extraordinarily persistent in the environment. And so, once they get released into air, water, discharged onto land, they simply spread through the environment. And so almost every person in America has a body burden of these P-phos pollutants in them. And again, it's associated with a wide range of industrial activities but the common products that people might have encountered: firefighting foam for car fires, plane fires. Almost every airport in America that's been around for a while will likely have these problems. The other application is they put it on carpeting; they put it on cloth, so it's not more apt to get stained and this is what used to be called Scotchgard. And so, this is then leaking out of dumps where all that old carpeting, all the old sofas, and old clothing got dumped. So almost every single ancient dump is also polluted with P-phos. Once it gets in the groundwater, it just migrates along. And then if there's a well or a reservoir downgradient, it gets impacted. So we're now working with citizens and elected officials literally from coast to coast to identify the problems in their midst and to try to take legal action to make sure that they are cleaned up. This is going to be probably the next big toxic-chemical challenge that faces our nation and obviously the president is not inclined to adopt drinking water standards. There's no regulation of these compounds that's meaningful and that's how come the states have to take action. Napoli Shkolnik is one of the biggest firms in the country doing this. They were famous for protecting drinking water suppliers on Long Island, so you can go to their website. And people can always go to [toxicstargeting.com](http://toxicstargeting.com) to check out the Legacy Toxic Site Campaign clips. They can look at our efforts to end New York's addiction to fossil fuels. And they can look at our harmful Algal Bloom campaign and see how we're attacking this problem trying to get the Clean Water Act enforced. And the big fight there is Cayuga Lake and Cornell's Lake Source Cooling Project. An illegal discharge permit was granted. More than 20 years ago, we fought Cornell to a standstill and this coming year, only three bodies of impaired waters are going to get what are called total maximum daily load comprehensive watershed cleanups: Cayuga Lake, Conesus Lake, Honeoye Lake. The polluters are going to fight back tooth and nail and the citizens will hopefully prevail because we're not going to rest on our laurels. We're not going to take anything for granted. We're going to require Governor Cuomo to make sure that the law is enforced. If it isn't enforced in New York, it's not going to get enforced anywhere else.

**Ralph Nader:** Okay, we're out of time, Walter Hang. Lest our listeners conclude that Walter presides over hundreds of staff, just tell them how you're doing all this with how many staff, Walter?

**Walter Hang:** Less than 10, but we have really big workstations. If people want me to help them in other states, they can give me a call. We're happy to help. We want effective activism. People just can't complain. People can't kvetch. They can't post on Facebook. That doesn't lead to the rigorous kind of review and analysis and adoption of reforms that's required. You have to know what you're talking about; you have to be organized. That's the only way to be effective.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, hurray for all that. This is a great story, isn't it, listeners? Have you been on national NPR, PBS, television, any of the national networks?

**Walter Hang:** Absolutely. So I've been on all the network news programs. I got I think six NPR pieces when we documented the General Electric Corporation didn't have a permit to dump PCBs in the river and this caused the pollution problems that migrated 200 miles.

**Ralph Nader:** That's the Hudson River you're talking about, right?

**Walter Hang:** We actually documented that GE had a lake of PCB oil that was coming up from the bottom of the Hudson. So we have documented more toxic chemical hazards than you can shake a stick at. And that's how come we can generate press because that's where the peg is. You look at the law; it's supposed to protect public health, the environment. You look at the problem; they knew about it, they never cleaned it up. And then you tell the public this is what you can do. This is how you can be Ralph Nader; this is how you can protect your community. If you believe your community is worth fighting for, join our efforts; don't take no for an answer. And then with each victory, you become more powerful, you become more capable, and pretty soon, you can smell problems and then you know exactly what to do when they hit the fan.

**Ralph Nader:** There's your playbook, listeners, the playbook of a vibrant, progressive, productive, safe, healthy, democratic society. Thank you very much, Walter Hang. We'll obviously continue this discussion in the coming months and we want the listeners to feedback what are their comments on what they've heard in this hour. Are they motivated to do what Walter is doing or are they going to get the maps from Walter's Toxics Targeting website? Has it changed your routine, listeners? That's what it is, you got to change routines; you got to do it on the ground; you got to meet people. You don't need all that many, a lot of good people in this country. They can be galvanized. Thank you very much, Walter.

**Walter Hang:** Thank you, Ralph, you are such a hero. This is your model. You're so self-effacing, but these are the techniques that you developed 40 years ago and I am proud to say that I am simply sticking with the ways that you've been successful and using technology, notably geographic information

systems, to become more powerful still. That's what it's going to take to save our environment and you've proven that citizens can be effective.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you, Walter. Hope our listeners and their friends connect with Walter Hang at [toxictargeting.com](http://toxictargeting.com), Ithaca, New York. Thank you, Walter.

**Walter Hang:** Thanks, Ralph.

**Steve Skrovan:** We have been speaking with Walter Hang, Founder of Toxics Targeting. We will link to that at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). We're going to take a short break. When we come back, Ralph is going to give us an update on the Boeing Max 8 situation and then answer some of the questions you've submitted over the past few weeks. You're listening to Ralph Nader Radio Hour, back after this.

**Russell Mokhiber:** From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your Corporate Crime Reporter "Morning Minute" for Friday, March 29, 2019. I'm Russell Mokhiber. In the past 10 years, the Department of Justice has brought more than 150 cases against large corporations under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, collecting billions of dollars in fines. What impact is that body of work having on deterring foreign bribery? Not much. Why not? In part because the fines against the corporations are not big enough to deter corporate bribery; in part because the fines are not used to heal the injuries caused in countries where the bribes were paid, and in part because executives of major multinationals are not going to jail for the bribery committed in the name of their corporations. In his new book, *Kickback: Exposing the Global Corporate Bribery Network*, David Montero, takes a deep dive into foreign bribery and the U.S. government's anemic response. Montero cites the work of University of Washington Finance Professor, Jonathan Karpoff. Karpoff estimates that more than 1500 corporations have paid bribes, but only 100 have been charged. For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

**Steve Skrovan:** Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph. Ralph, what is the latest on the Boeing MAX 8 situation?

**Ralph Nader:** Boeing is going all out to say they're fixing the software; the planes will be up in a few weeks, no problem. They're swarming over Capitol Hill. The hearings are starting in the Senate and they'll start soon in the House. The Department of Transportation and the Inspector General has initiated an investigation. There are going to be tort lawsuits filed by lawyers on behalf of the next of kin. The press is actually digging in from the BBC to Seattle Times, New York Times, so my message to Boeing is it's all going to come out, Boeing; don't try to fight it. You better behave accordingly. The problem is, not the software. The basic problem now is that the design defect of the Boeing 737 MAX 8 and 9. That is, when they increased the size of the engine and put them up higher and forward more,

they destabilized the fuselage and that led to the potential of the stall and that led to the miscue of the inadequate software with only one sensor. And so, to get a grip on this, we want to make sure that these planes are not put back up in the air because Boeing is fearing more cancellations from countries around the world for more orders of this deadly 737 MAX 8 and 9. So we want to form a consumer boycott; lay the groundwork for it where people say we're not flying this plane; Southwest we're not flying this plane; American, not flying this plane; United, we want another plane. Once the plane gets a stigma, once the brand gets a stigma, it gets the attention of the Boeing executives who pressured unfairly and cruelly their engineers, stifled technical descent in order to get this plane up in the air to compete with Airbus.

And if they want to compete with Airbus, they better tell the American people why Airbus doesn't have these defects--why they have solved the problems that plague the Boeing 737 MAX 8 and 9. So go to Flyer's Rights dot org. That's the one that keeps you up to date with all kinds of information. Flyer's Rights dot org., run by Paul Hudson who lost his daughter 30 years ago in the Pan Am explosion over Scotland.

**Steve Skrovan:** Okay, thanks for that, Ralph. You've got your marching orders, people. Now let's take some listener questions.

**David Feldman:** This next question comes from John Worthington. He says, "Ralph, what precisely was the impetus for the government's rightward shift that began in the mid-1970s?"

**Ralph Nader:** Well obviously it was the Nixon/Ford Administration that lasted until January 1977 before Jimmy Carter became president. But basically, the corporations mobilized to huge unprecedented levels. They poured money into congressional campaigns. They challenged good legislators with corporatist primary candidates. They swarmed over Capitol Hill. They put out all kinds of phony studies showing that regulation is bad--it restricts innovation; it costs jobs and deregulation is a great liberator. And that was started with the Powell Report. Powell became Chief Supreme Court Justice, Lewis Powell. But he was a utility lawyer, corporate utility lawyer in Richmond, Virginia. And he drafted this notorious memo called The Powell Memorandum that laid out the strategy, the propaganda strategy, the lobbying strategy and all the ways that the corporations counter attacked.

**David Feldman:** I know we're short for time, I apologize. Did you know about the Powell Memo when it first came out? Because you were mentioned, you were the impetus of the Powell Memo.

**Ralph Nader:** Yes, they've singled me out as the chief antagonist of the free enterprise corporate system as they collected their corporate subsidies and rejoiced with their corporate tax loopholes.

**David Feldman:** Were you aware of it when it came out? Because it's so seminal now.

**Ralph Nader:** It took a little time before it was disclosed. It was a top secret memorandum just for the Business Round Table. Since then, it's been written up a lot in books and articles.

**Steve Skrovan:** Well, thank you, everybody for your questions. Keep them coming on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour website. I want to thank our guest again today, the indomitable Walter Hang. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call the Wrap Up.

**David Feldman:** Join us next week on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour when we talk opiate crisis with Dr. Sidney Wolfe. Thank you, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you all. On the criminal negligence of Boeing, go to Flyer's Rights dot org and to get whether you want to join a consumer boycott of that deadly plane and keep it grounded until the aircrafts are safe. And by the way, Greg Ostrum, we do want to interview that wonderful young activist in Sweden, Greta Thunberg, for her dramatic galvanizing of young people around the country and the world regarding climate disruption.