

Partial transcript of Leonard Higgins's climate necessity defense testimony, drawn from the 06:38 minute video taken Saturday evening, **November 18**, at the **Climate Necessity Defense Mock Trial** held at the University of Montana campus in Missoula.

Mr. Higgins begins with a summary of his working life and family, followed by his quest as an elder to face and grieve what was wrong with society — and discover what he himself might be able to do toward improvement. The "**necessity defense**" aspects of Mr. Higgins's testimony begin at timecode 02:17 of the video posted on the Shut It Down - Climate Direct Action Facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/ClimateDirectAction/videos/1954625308120341/>

LEONARD HIGGINS:

02:17 ... After retirement, as I looked at climate change, I, frankly, was shocked and scared. As I looked at what the scientists were saying, and I looked at how we were responding — how the federal government was responding, how state governments were responding, and the political and public discourse about climate change — I realized that I couldn't just mind my own business and expect other people to mind theirs. I had to do something myself, if I expected my kids and grandkids to have a future. So, out of that came a move toward activism.

I did about three years doing regular organizing. Several of us from the UU [Unitarian Universalist] church in Corvallis [Oregon] and in the community formed a chapter of 350.org: 350-Corvallis. We worked with the City of Corvallis to do a climate action plan. We testified at hearings. We did protests and trained people to prepare for direct action. ... And over the course of that time I saw that what we were doing had so little impact.

And there were so many others that also were doing similar work and not changing things.

I read two books: I read Naomi Klein's "This Changes Everything" and I read Mary Wood's "Nature's Trust", and the first chapters of those books were so depressing. They talked about all the work that's been done since landmark environmental protection laws were passed in the seventies — and the slippery slope that has happened since that time away from the intent of those laws to actually protect us to where we are now.

When I had a chance to begin doing actions that had some chance to elevate the discussion, as Dr. [Todd] Hastings described, to move things. It's so clear that we know how to address this problem. We have so many people already working on it. We have the technology for wind and solar alternative energy to replace the dirty fossil fuels. We have people like Ken Ward who have been working on policy, to be able to change the way we do agriculture, forestry — the way we do transportation.

It's the immense power and the deep pockets, the immense profits, that the fossil fuel companies are taking that are blocking what we need to do. I think that they're surprised at how long that they've been able to hold off the kind of move that we need to make in reducing fossil fuel emissions. They copied the work of the tobacco companies in sowing doubt, in trying to divert attention away. And they [the tobacco companies] were very successful in keeping on, in having profits from tobacco sales for a long time. And the fossil fuel companies: they've been at this now for thirty and forty years since we knew what needed to change. I think they're shocked at how long they've been able to do this.

So, my act in participating with the others in shutting down the tar sands pipelines is an act of desperation. It's the only thing left — that I see left — that has a chance of requiring the kind of individual action, the kind of individual commitment to change, that we need to address this problem. [END]