

## Julie Dachtler

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**From:** Erica Ballinger <e\_ballinger@att.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 26, 2024 3:38 PM  
**To:** Clerkoftheboard  
**Subject:** time sensitive request re: investment review

Dear Yolo County Board of Supervisors:

I understand that an annual review of investments is on the agenda for tomorrow's board meeting. I am writing to share information with you about a current investment of concern, and to request prompt board action involving it.

I recently learned that the county has over \$3 million invested in Caterpillar, Inc. which has been a company of concern on human rights based grounds for well over a decade. As noted by Amnesty International, Caterpillar is non compliant with the United Nations' [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) yet its shareholders have refused to take action to remedy their non-compliance, for example by restricting sales to parties engaged in ongoing and egregious violations of human rights.

As documented by Human Rights Watch and several other international human rights groups, Caterpillar's D9 weaponized bulldozers have for years been used to systematically carry out war crimes including in the illegal mass demolition of homes, schools, roads and other civilian infrastructure. D9s are also used to target unarmed civilians resulting in injuries and deaths, including the death of at least one known American peace activist. See [Human Rights Watch Letter to Caterpillar, Inc.](#)

Therefore, a growing number of entities have divested from Caterpillar on human rights based grounds. This includes local governments (for example the City of Hayward, City of Portland), pensions funds (TIAA-CREF and KLP- Norway's largest pension fund), religious denominations (Presbyterian Church USA, Unitarian Universalist Association, Quaker Friends Fiduciary, and others), as well as a long list of academic entities. (I'm writing this letter quickly to meet the deadline, however, happy to share additional resourced on any of the above.)

As taxpayers we expect Yolo County to be a good steward of our tax dollars by investing both soundly and ethically. Please review the County's investment policy to consider adding an ethical or human rights based screen on investments. I understand such a policy review would require time. For now, I urge the County to **at minimum** move to divest from Caterpillar, Inc.

My Jewish father (who was just a boy during the Holocaust) taught us that we must stand up and speak out in the face of injustice, even if it brings risk to ourselves as individuals. For it was only through silence and acquiescence that millions of Jews in Europe could be rounded up, packed into trains, and shipped off to extermination camps to be mass murdered. It is from this imperative that I write to you.

The decades long military occupation of Palestine, and now 10+ month genocide on Gaza, must come to an end. We have to work toward a future based on equality and justice for all people, rather than one rooted in subjugation, dispossession and repeated cycles of violence. I understand the board declined to consider a ceasefire resolution last winter because the majority felt it would be overstepping their role as a county board. However, County investments are certainly a matter of local concern.

I urge the County to invest our tax dollars in life, not death. Divesting from Caterpillar would be a good first step.

Thank you,

Erica

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