

# THE PROGRESSIVE FORUM

Great Minds, Great Answers

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WITH REDFORD PHOTO

Robert Redford Will Appear at The Progressive Forum March 27 to Premier His

Documentary Film, *Fighting Goliath: Texas Coal Wars*

Film icon and environmentalist, Robert Redford, will appear at The Progressive Forum Thursday March 27 at the Wortham Center at 7:30 to introduce a 30 minute documentary, *Fighting Goliath: Texas Coal Wars* at its Houston premier. The film was commissioned by The Redford Center at the Sundance Preserve and narrated by Robert Redford.

Following the screening, Redford will participate in a panel discussion with Texans in the film including two Houstonians, Mayor Bill White and attorney Steve Susman. Other panelists include former Dallas Mayor Laura Miller; Hallsburg rancher Marc Scott; and Tom "Smitty" Smith of Public Citizen Texas. Other panelists include the film's director Mat Hames and John Hofmeister, president of Shell Oil Company and former chairman of the Greater Houston Partnership.

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*Fighting Goliath* is the story of how an unlikely collaboration of Texas cities, ranchers, business leaders, policy makers, environmental and community groups, private citizens, and lawyers came together in common cause to oppose the permitting of 18 coal-burning power plants. The film examines the dangerous impacts of conventional coal plants and the power of community action.

Tickets start at \$14 and are available at [www.progressiveforumhouston.org](http://www.progressiveforumhouston.org) or 832-251-0706. A free DVD of the film will be given to everyone attending the event. There are discounts for students, seniors 65 and older, groups of 10 or more, and educators including teachers and administrators at all levels. A valid ID is required at the door. A limited number of \$200 tickets are available and include a pre-event reception with Robert Redford, panelists, and the film team.

The evening's corporate sponsors are Susman Godfrey and Shell Oil Company.

Commissioned by The Redford Center at the Sundance Preserve in Sundance, Utah, it was co-produced by Alpheus Media in Austin, Texas. *Fighting Goliath* was first shown last year at the Redford Center's annual mayors' conference called the Sundance Summit: A Mayor's Gathering on Climate Protection, designed to provide U.S. mayors with the best thinking and tools to help them take action on global warming in their communities. The Redford Center at the Sundance Preserve has been devoted to problem solving, the creative process, and transforming public policy for 25 years.

A media advisory from the Redford Center says, "With the goal of sparking a national dialogue about the impacts and consequences of coal, the film uses the example

of Texas to take an intimate look at today's global energy challenge to power communities in a way that supports the local economy and protects public health.”

Randall Morton, Progressive Forum president, said, “Robert Redford's deep commitment on these issues and willingness to come to Houston has enabled this unprecedented public education event about coal, energy, and a sustainable future.”

In August 2006, just after Texans learned that 18 new coal-burning power plants had been proposed, 11 by TXU, then-Dallas Mayor Laura Miller formed Texas Cities for Clean Air Coalition. Teaming up with Houston Mayor Bill White, she urged other mayors to join the fight, and the coalition grew to 38 cities, towns, and school boards, backed by ranchers and farmers. The coalition engaged Houston law firm, Susman Godfrey, to block state approval of the 11 new coal-burning power plants proposed by TXU which had been fast-tracked by Texas Governor Rick Perry. Susman Godfrey did all the legal work on a pro bono basis, estimated at \$2 million in billable time. In February 2007, just before the Susman firm was about to try the case in state court, TXU withdrew eight of the 11 permit applications when it announced it would be sold to private equity firms Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Company, Goldman Sachs, and the Texas Pacific Group of Forth Worth. The largest buyout in history at \$32 billion, the mega-deal set a new precedent of an acquisition requiring approval by green groups. Negotiations were joined by dealmakers from the National Resource Defense Council (NRDC) and Environmental Defense. Susman Godfrey continues to represent the coalition against the three other plants, seeking to overturn permits. TXU is now called

Energy Future Holdings Corporation and continues to be headquartered in Dallas.

Morton commented, “Redford’s film spotlights the mayors’ coalition as an historic new success model. Members of this coalition have different values, beliefs, and politics, but together they delivered an historic level of public pressure. Our panel discussion with coalition members on their team dynamics is a key part of this educational event.”

The Redford Center media advisory said that according to the National Resource Defenses Council, in America, coal is the largest source of global warming pollution, and coal-burning power plants are responsible for more than 30 percent of all carbon dioxide pollution. Coal causes more damage to people and the planet than any other energy source. Currently, the U.S. Department of Energy reports 114 new conventional coal-burning power plants are slated for construction in the U.S.

Other Progressive Forum spring events include Bill McKibben on April 28, the author of the environmental classic, *End of Nature*, the first book for general readership on global warming. And breast cancer survivor, Elizabeth Edwards, wife of former Presidential hopeful, John Edwards, will appear May 21 in a nonpolitical event on overcoming life obstacles, discussing her book, *Saving Graces*.

In addition to his work as an actor, director, and producer, Robert Redford has been a noted environmentalist and activist since the early 1970s, and has served for over 30 years as a Trustee of the Natural Resources Defense Council. He was an advocate for the Clean Air Act (1974-75), Energy Conservation and Production Act

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(1974-76), and the National Energy Policy (1989). In 1975, he fought against the building of a coal-burning power plant planned for the area in Southern Utah surrounded by five national parks. The plant was never built. In 1997, after a long and contentious battle in which Redford worked with a large coalition of activists to save this very same area from commercial exploitation, President Clinton designated it the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument.

In the early 1980s, Redford founded the Institute For Resource Management (IRM), which he led throughout the decade, bringing together environmentalists and industrialists to resolve conflicts and promote sustainable development. Under Redford's tenure, the IRM tackled issues ranging from the future of the electric power industry, resource development on Indian lands, offshore oil leasing in the Bering Sea, and urban air quality in Denver, Phoenix, Sacramento, and New York City. In 1989, IRM initiated a global warming summit called Greenhouse Glasnost bringing together scientists, industrial leaders, and policy makers from the Soviet Union and the U.S. In 2005, Redford continued his climate work by co-founding an annual conference of mayors, the Sundance Summit: A Mayors Gathering on Climate Protection.

Robert Redford has received numerous awards for his environmental work including the 1989 Audubon Medal Award, the 1987 United Nations Global 500 Award, the 1993 Earth Day International Award, and the 1994 Nature Conservancy Award. He was also the recipient of the 1997 National Medal of Arts by President Clinton and the 2001 Freedom in Film Award presented by the First Amendment Center. In

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December 2005, Redford accepted the Kennedy Center Honors for his “distinguished achievement in performing arts and in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to the life of our country.”

He is a member of the advisory board of the Land Trust Napa Valley and a board member of The Gaylord A. Nelson Environmental Endowment. He’s on the National Council of the Smithsonian’s new National Museum of the American Indian. He has also served on boards of the Environmental Defense Fund, The Smithsonian Institution, Environmental Policy Center, the Navajo Education and Scholarship Foundation, the Solar Lobby, and Yosemite Institute, among others.

Redford is a published author of *The Outlaw Trail* (1978). In 1979, he produced *The Solar Film*, a short film about solar energy that was nominated for an Academy Award. He produced other documentaries including award-winning *Yosemite: Fate of Heaven* and the feature length documentary, *Incident at Oglala*. In 2007, he was executive producer of the feature documentary, *The Unforeseen*, a story of development encroachment in Austin and Barton Springs in Texas.

Redford landed his first Broadway starring role in *Sunday in New York*, followed by *Little Moon of Alban*, and Neil Simon’s *Barefoot in the Park*. His first movie role was in *War Hunt*. In 1969, Redford and Paul Newman teamed to star in the Western, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. The film became an instant classic and firmly established Redford as one of the industry’s top leading men. He and Newman reunited in *The Sting*

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which won seven Oscars including Best Picture, in addition to Redford's nomination for Best Actor.

However Redford, in prepared material, says he's especially proud of small, heartfelt projects such as *Ordinary People*, *Quiz Show*, *Jeremiah Johnson*, and *A River Runs Through It*.

The Sundance Preserve is comprised of over 5,000 acres of wilderness protected in perpetuity by the Redford family.

Redford founded the Sundance Institute in 1981 which was dedicated to supporting emerging screenwriters and directors and independent cinema. The Institute's year-round activities include screen writing, directing, writing, and producing labs. The Sundance Film Festival is produced annually by the Sundance Institute program and is widely acclaimed to be the most important showcase of independent cinema. To further the reach of independent film, Redford launched the Sundance Channel in 1996, and more recently the Sundance Cinemas theaters in 2006. Rounding out the Sundance family is the Sundance Catalog launched in 1989 which supports the work of artisans, and Sundance Resort which is also home to the laboratory programs of the Sundance Institute.

Susman Godfrey, founded in 1980, is nationally recognized as a leading commercial litigation boutique with 85 trial lawyers in Houston, Dallas, Los Angeles, Seattle, and New York. The six partners representing the coalition are Steve Susman, Eric Mayer, Terry Oxford, John Turner, Ophelia Camina, and Michael Diehl.

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Steve Susman is a native Houstonian, and in addition to his legal work, teaches a Climate Change Litigation course at the University of Houston Law School. He was featured in *The National Law Journal* as one of the nation's top ten litigators in 2006.

The Progressive Forum is a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(C)(3) civic speaker organization presenting seven events a year at The Wortham Center. It's the first civic speaker organization in the nation dedicated to progressive values. Its purpose is to enrich our democracy and culture by striving to present the greatest minds from all the fields of human endeavor, the sciences and the humanities, as well as politics and public affairs, those it believes are advancing individuals, our species, and life on the earth towards success. Its progressive viewpoint is rooted in the mainstream constitutional, enlightenment, and egalitarian values of America's founding fathers, moderate values that need affirming, now more than ever. It's the nation's first civic speaker organization expressly dedicated to progressive values.

This year of 2008 marks the third full season of The Progressive Forum. Past speakers include Al Gore who launched *An Inconvenient Truth* at The Progressive Forum, his first U.S. book event for that title. Others have included Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. Jared Diamond, Seymour Hersh, Molly Ivins, George Soros, Edward O. Wilson, Frank Rich, Garrison Keillor, Joe Klein, Tim Flannery, Anna Deavere Smith, Gloria Steinem, James Hansen, and Ken Burns.

All Progressive Forum events are carbon neutral through a donation from DrivingGreen.com which offsets 51 tons of greenhouse gasses per event including the speaker's air and ground transportation, venue air conditioning and power, and audience driving to and from the theater.

The Progressive Forum originated a new model in the field of public affairs in



Houston to deliver a higher quality experience to much larger audiences that typically attend speaking events. The Progressive Forum operates like a performing arts company by using the finest theaters, paying speaker fees to top intellectual stars, and marketing throughout the region. It offers convenient box office services through its website allowing ticket buyers to print tickets at their computer, in addition to traditional phone sales.

Founder and president, Randall R. Morton has owned Randall Morton International, Inc., for 32 years, an advertising and public relations agency whose clients have included leading oil equipment companies in the U.S., Japan, Mexico, and Europe. Morton created and hosted the Oilfield Breakfast Forum, which became the largest speaker platform in the oil industry whose surplus went to Houston's SEARCH Homeless Project. While earning a degree in government from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., he served as an issue writer for the Democratic National Committee.