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Exxon Mobil spent \$2 million on pro-fracking ad campaign

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ALBANY — Oil giant Exxon Mobil Corp. spent \$2 million on a pro-drilling advertising campaign en route to becoming New York’s second-highest spender on lobbying last year, according to a report Thursday from the state’s ethics board.

Exxon Mobil spent \$2.1 million total on its New York lobbying in 2012, second only to the \$4.2 million spent by a coalition of business interests known as the Committee to Save New York, the Joint Commission on Public Ethics found.

State records show the company sent \$2 million in July to the Independent Oil & Gas Association of New York, a trade group, to fund a series of newspaper and radio advertisements in support of high-volume hydraulic fracturing. The much-debated method, also known as fracking, is used to help unlock natural gas from the gas-rich Marcellus Shale formation and has been on hold in New York since 2008.

“We felt it was important to support the campaign that they were putting forward and the public-education initiatives that we wanted to support,” said Alan Jeffers, an Exxon spokesman.

Overall, lobbying spending totaled \$205 million in 2012, a 7 percent decline from the \$220 million spent the previous year, according to the ethics board’s report. It was the first time year-to-year spending had decreased since 1999 and 2000, and the lowest total spent on lobbying since 2008.

Exxon Mobil, the world’s largest publicly traded company, has an interest in whether Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s administration ultimately allows large-scale hydrofracking. In 2008, XTO Energy — now a subsidiary of Exxon — struck a \$110 million deal to lease the oil-and-gas rights to about 46,000 acres of land in eastern Broome and Delaware counties in the Marcellus Shale region.

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