



MICHAEL L. WILLIAMS
RAILROAD COMMISSIONER

**THE HONORABLE MICHAEL L. WILLIAMS
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE FINANCIAL SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE
ON INTERNATIONAL MONETARY POLICY, TRADE AND TECHNOLOGY
IN SUPPORT OF
H.R. 180 – THE DARFUR ACCOUNTABILITY AND DIVESTMENT ACT**

TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2007

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you. I'm grateful that you are considering this most important issue.

My name is Michael Williams. In 1998, my friend, then Governor George W. Bush appointed me to a vacancy on the Railroad Commission of Texas. In November 2000 and again in 2002, the people of Texas elected me to continue as Railroad Commissioner. I am the first African American in Texas history to hold an executive statewide elected post and the highest-ranking African American in Texas state government.

The title "Railroad Commission" is a misnomer. We have nothing to do with railroads. The Railroad Commission of Texas is our state's principle energy regulatory agency.

My interest in Sudan dates back to the beginning of this decade when I began to hear heart-wrenching stories of the two decades-long civil war between the Government in Khartoum and the Southern rebels. The war claimed two million lives and caused the massive displacement and enslavement of civilians in Southern Sudan. The murderous campaign against the people of Southern Sudan was fueled by oil revenues. Perversely, the land from which Southern Sudanese were forcibly displaced yielded thousands of barrels of oil a day and the profits from the oil sales were used to wage a brutal campaign against those same people. In June 2001, I wrote the following in an op-ed that appeared in all of the major Texas newspapers –

More than 200,000 barrels of crude are produced in southern Sudan daily. While that represents less than 3 percent of world daily crude consumption, the \$500 million annual revenue from crude sales earned by the Sudanese government gives it an enormous advantage of resources and power.

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Williams, cont'd.

Further, the search for crude is driving the fighting further into southern Sudan. As new oil fields are discovered and infrastructure developed, even more Southern Sudanese are being driven from their homes, killed or enslaved.

I am proud that during that difficult time in Sudan's history, Texans took action to bring about peace. Along with a number of public and private institutions, the Texas teachers' pension fund divested from the Canadian oil firm, Talisman Energy, which was aiding the Government of Sudan in its murderous campaign. Talisman's exit from Sudan is hailed by many observers as helping to pressure the Government of Sudan to end the war and sign the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. It is just one of numerous examples that demonstrate the power of economic pressure to change the behavior of Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir's government.

As you all know, that historic agreement which ended the longest-running and most deadly conflict in the world was overshadowed by the Government of Sudan's deadly assault against its own civilians in the western-most region of the country, Darfur. The facts of the conflict which Congress and President Bush rightly determined to be genocide are well known to all of us here and, in fact, to most Americans. What is beginning to be understood by Americans is that this genocide is fueled by the same oil revenues as were used to terrorize the people of Southern Sudan.

To date, seven states have divested and an additional nineteen states are considering divestment from the companies that are enabling the Government of Sudan to carry out genocide in Darfur. I'm proud to say that Texas is one of the states considering divestment of its public pension funds. The support for the identical House and Senate divestment bills is overwhelming. Evangelical Christians are joining hands with liberal college students and previously unimaginable bipartisan coalitions have formed in the Texas legislature. Nearly every major Texas publication has editorialized in support of the divestment campaign.

Texas Governor Rick Perry might have best expressed the feeling of Texans in his February State of the State Address when he said, "***I also believe that the example we set in Texas can have international ramifications. I join...a bipartisan group of legislators in protesting . . . in protesting strongly. . . the ethnic genocide occurring in Darfur, by calling on the state of Texas to divest of companies doing business in the Sudan.***"

As a state official with the privilege of observing some of the wonderful benefits that petroleum can bring to our world, it is deeply distressing to see this precious natural resource used in Sudan

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Williams, cont'd.

not for progress and prosperity but for pain. I beseech the Congress to formally authorize and encourage "targeted divestment" from the worst-offending companies doing business with the Government of Sudan. In addition, I urge this committee and the Congress to consider divestment of the federal pension funds and to invite your international counterparts to take similar action.

I invite members of the committee to travel to Texas and witness the passion with which Texans of all stripes have embraced this campaign. We sincerely believe that our actions will reverberate internationally and will help protect innocent civilians by changing the behavior of a murderous regime.

I thank you for the opportunity to share my story. I trust that you will embrace the opportunity to support our campaign and that together our efforts might help save the grandparents, the cousins, the children who could be the next victims of this genocide.

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