



Obama “Green Energy” Scandals Widen as Lawmakers Probe Deeper

The Obama administration and its Energy Department are under fire over controversial “green energy” schemes yet again, with Republican lawmakers alleging on August 15 that senior officials may have violated federal law by attempting to conceal records using private e-mail accounts. Last week, the House Oversight Committee also requested more information from President Obama about his personal involvement in funneling billions of taxpayer dollars to politically connected companies such as Solyndra that later failed.



In a [letter](#) sent on August 8, House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) and two other senior GOP members of Congress said they had acquired documents that sparked serious concerns over potential cronyism. They asked Obama to explain the extent of his participation in the scandal, as well as to detail his knowledge of decisions made by White House officials that resulted in gargantuan losses to taxpayers.

“The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has obtained documents which raise questions about how your interactions with business leaders at political events affected decisions to give billions of taxpayer dollars in loan guarantees to green energy companies through the Department of Energy’s (‘DOE’) 1705 Loan Guarantee Program,” wrote Issa and Subcommittee Chairmen Jim Jordan and Trey Gowdy in their letter to President Obama. The loan program in question was used to shower the American people’s money on assorted well-connected firms, many of which are now bankrupt.

Lawmakers are asking the administration to provide documents and information to congressional investigators probing an assortment of green-energy scandals — including a “full explanation” of Obama’s involvement. Republicans are also seeking to uncover details of any discussions the president may have had about energy projects at “political” events.

“The failure of several companies that received loans under the program, including Solyndra’s August 2011 bankruptcy, led to the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer funds,” the letter states. “The newly-obtained documents show that senior members of the administration were aware of substantial risks to taxpayers and objected to the way the funds were being distributed. They were overruled.”

According to the letter, more than a few senior officials within the administration advised against making many of the risky loans to “green” companies. E-mails cited in the document suggest Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, former Office of Management and Budget (OMB) director Jacob Lew, and National Economic Council Director Gene Sperling — Obama’s top economic advisors — were all opposed to some elements of the Energy Department’s failed schemes.

DOE Secretary Steven Chu, however, apparently “defeated” the opposition and handed out the vast



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on August 17, 2012

sums of taxpayer money under highly unfavorable and possibly unlawful terms anyway. “The American people have a right to know who adjudicated that dispute and what factors led to that decision,” lawmakers said in the letter to Obama asking for more documents.

Another e-mail cited by lawmakers was from DOE Chief of Staff Brandon Hurlbut. In June of 2011, Hurlbut wrote to Secretary Chu that President Obama regularly hears about the loan guarantee program “because at official events and political events he interacts with business community and Congressional members — many of them have some affiliation or interest in the numerous [loan guarantee] applications [DOE has] received that involve substantial funds.”

That message, as well as Chu’s response to it, appears to contradict past statements by the Obama administration indicating that all DOE loans were made within the department based solely on their merits. Other e-mails also suggest that bad decisions may have been rushed due to political pressure on particular projects that were “important” to the president.

“The American people have a right to know the level of involvement you and other senior White House officials had in the loan guarantee program,” the letter concludes. Lawmakers asked that President Obama hand over a broad array of documents related to the scheme. Also requested was a list of all individuals he met with at political events where the projects were discussed, as well as a list of loan guarantees discussed there. The deadline is August 21.

Meanwhile, Energy Secretary Chu and other senior DOE officials have come under renewed congressional scrutiny. Lawmakers sent a [letter](#) demanding that Chu “clarify” apparently false testimony by him and subordinates about efforts to unlawfully conceal evidence and documents from investigators.

The department must also admit whether or not officials knew investors in companies receiving taxpayer funds. Despite DOE officials testifying that they did not know the investors, newly acquired documents show they did — including top Obama ally and Solyndra investor George Kaiser. White House involvement in the controversial loan debacle also featured prominently in the letter.

“Recently obtained documents show DOE officials frequently used Yahoo! and Gmail to communicate about the loan guarantee program,” lawmakers said in the letter to Chu. “This use of non-government e-mail accounts for official business may have violated the Presidential Records Act (PRA) and the Federal Records Act (FRA). The documents also show that testimony given to the Committee by current and former DOE officials, including you, was inaccurate, and may have been intentionally false.”

According to the letter, the House Oversight Committee obtained thousands of pages worth of documents detailing official business being conducted through private e-mail accounts. More than a dozen DOE officials were involved, as were senior White House staffers. In other words, federal employees — supposedly public servants — may have been deliberately breaking the law in an effort to keep certain official communications out of the reach of Congress and the public by using outside e-mail services.

“These e-mails show DOE officials routinely using non-official accounts to conduct official business,” lawmakers said, noting that the lawlessness and secrecy was at odds with Obama’s promise of transparent government. “Prior to the Committee’s acquisition of these documents from individuals, the Department had not produced them.”

The latest evidence uncovered also puts past testimony and official statements made by senior officials in question. “These e-mails contradict important assertions made by the Administration and DOE’s



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failure to produce them is troubling,” the letter added. Also, there is “little doubt” that DOE officials “participated in an intentional effort to shield their communications from legal scrutiny and the public.”

It gets worse. “Despite significant public interest in this matter, new discoveries indicate the Department of Energy and its employees have deceptively and unlawfully withheld documents related to White House involvement in decisions related to loans, correspondence with loan applicants, and internal agency deliberations about the risky use of taxpayer funds,” the letter continued. Such practices violate federal law and could result in long jail sentences for those involved.

One of the e-mails cited in the letter, lawmakers say, offers some insight into why so much communication was taking place through non-official e-mail accounts. “Don’t ever send an email on doe email with private email addresses,” DOE Loan Program Office Director Jonathan Silver stated in an e-mail to a colleague, contradicting testimony he had made in Congress. “That makes them subpoenaable.”

As the energy secretary, however, Chu’s alleged lies must be explained immediately. “Your apparent false or — at minimum — misleading testimony, combined with the widespread use of private e-mail accounts by Department employees, creates the appearance that you have been complicit in an organized effort to deceive Congress and hide the motives and process for decisions to use taxpayer funds to aid private interests,” the letter explained.

Lawmakers said Chu has until August 28 to respond. If DOE continues to delay or obstruct the investigation, the House Oversight Committee may have to resort to the use of “compulsory process” to get the truth. Critics have been expressing outrage for over a year that taxpayers lost enormous sums of money on Obama’s half-baked subsidies to politically connected firms. Incredibly, however, it appears that the scandals just get bigger.

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