



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on December 27, 2011

Washington Post: Solyndra Loan Was “Infused” With Politics

Even the left-leaning Washington Post has acquired a sour taste over the Obama administration’s deplorable investment in Solyndra (left), the defunct solar-panel maker that reaped more than \$500 million in taxpayer-backed loan guarantees. The administration’s fervor for the so-called “green” energy program, the newspaper noted in a recent article, was “infused” with political motives that spawned reckless policymaking and resulted in millions of wasted taxpayer dollars.



"Meant to create jobs and cut reliance on foreign oil, Obama’s green-technology program was infused with politics at every level, *The Washington Post* found in an analysis of thousands of memos, company records and internal e-mails," the article reads. "Political considerations were raised repeatedly by company investors, Energy Department bureaucrats and officials at the White House."

"The records, some previously unreported, show that when warned that financial disaster might lie ahead, the administration remained steadfast in its support for Solyndra."

While Energy Department officials allege that the loan’s approval was not politically-driven, and that it was based solely on the company’s merits, memos and email correspondence unveil an opposing truth. Republicans on a House Energy subcommittee [released](#) internal administration documents a couple of months ago revealing an attempt to expedite completion of the loan package so Vice President Joe Biden could announce it during a trip to California.

Moreover, *The Daily Caller* [found](#) that company representatives were dispatched to the White House on numerous occasions to court administration officials:

According to White House visitor logs, between March 12, 2009, and April 14, 2011, Solyndra officials and investors made no fewer than 20 trips to the West Wing. In the week before the administration awarded Solyndra with the first-ever alternative energy loan guarantee on March 20, four separate visits were logged.

George Kaiser, who has in the past been labeled a major Solyndra investor as well as an Obama donor, made three visits to the White House on March 12, 2009, and one on March 13. Kaiser has denied any direct involvement in the Solyndra deal and through a statement from his foundation said he "did not participate in any discussions with the U.S. government regarding the loan."



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The *Post* also observed that beyond the administration's politically-charged behavior in approving Solyndra's loan, discussions over how to contain the looming political fallout were all too prevalent. Indeed, as Solyndra teetered on the brink of collapse, administration officials "rarely, if ever" discussed the damning consequences for the employees who were laid off, the financial damage to taxpayers, or the impact on the development of clean-energy technology. Instead, the newspaper notes, they focused on the political turmoil that Solyndra's demise would inflict on President Obama's prospects for a second term.

"What's so troubling is that politics seems to be the dominant factor," asserted Ryan Alexander, president of Taxpayers for Common Sense, a nonpartisan federal budget watchdog group. "They're not talking about what the taxpayers are losing; they're not talking about the failure of the technology, whether we bet on the wrong horse. What they are talking about is 'How are we going to manage this politically?'"

On multiple occasions, Solyndra investors wrote that the Obama administration appeared to be developing elaborate strategies to avoid "looking bad." A December 2010 email between administration staffers seemed to corroborate these speculations, resolving that "a meltdown" at Solyndra "would likely be very embarrassing for DOE and the administration."

In a memo, a company board member chronicled in detail a list of mistakes he thought Christian Gronet, Solyndra's founder, had made, asserting that Gronet's actions "border on moronic" and that his muddled judgment had roused an executive mutiny. Even so, the board member noted, Gronet retained his post because of his close relationships with DOE leaders and because he had "star power in D.C."

Political calibration was particularly acute in an email early this year between administration staffers who analyzed the degree of political fallout that could materialize from delaying Solyndra's bankruptcy by a few months. "The optics of a Solyndra default will be bad whenever it occurs," one staffer wrote. "If Solyndra defaults down the road, the optics will arguably be worse later than they would be today... In addition, the timing will likely coincide with the 2012 campaign season heating up."

Solyndra's most revealing Washington connection, the *Post* avers, involved George Kaiser, a prominent Democratic fundraiser and Oklahoma billionaire whose foundation owned more than a third of the company. Only days before the 2010 midterm elections, Kaiser traveled to Las Vegas to attend a private fundraising dinner for Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), but the event's headlining act was President Obama, whom Kaiser was intent on speaking with. The *Post* reported:

Kaiser did not squander... While he avoided the use of the word "Solyndra," according to the account he later gave to colleagues, he complained to the president about Chinese manufacturers dumping cheap solar panels on the U.S. market and pressed Obama's deputy chief of staff about the need for a Buy American Act for federal agencies. The company was intent on making the federal government a major customer — part of what a Solyndra investment adviser called the "Uncle Sam" strategy — and the new act would give Solyndra an advantage.

Records show that Kaiser's involvement with Solyndra was extensive, as he frequently contacted Solyndra executives and investors, and he became a regular visitor to the White House, advising officials on how to leverage the power of the West Wing.

Naturally, the White House has denied all such accusations, and has claimed that the administration had only good intentions in its involvement with the Solyndra loan: "This administration is one that will fiercely fight to protect jobs even when it's not the popular thing to do." However, writes Abby



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Schachter of the *New York Post*, "As with the Keystone XL pipeline, as with natural gas development, as with the payroll tax holiday, as with EPA regulations of every industry, this kind of claim is so false it is laughable."

And as law professor Glenn Harlan Reynolds noted in a recent [blog](#), "All the 'stimulus' and 'green energy' stuff was never anything but a program to put taxpayer money into the hands of cronies and supporters."

Photo: An auction sign is shown at bankrupt Solyndra headquarters in Fremont, Calif., Monday, Oct. 31, 2011: AP Images



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