



Written by [James Murphy](#) on January 9, 2024

The Shadowy World of a Special Presidential Envoy for Climate

What is John Kerry hiding?

In his role as the special presidential envoy for climate (SPEC) for the Biden administration, Kerry oversees a federal government funded fiefdom that costs American taxpayers at least \$4.3 million per year in salaries. In response to a [FOIA request](#) from the *Boston Herald*, Kerry or his office provided the salaries of those who work for the SPEC but redacted the names of those “policy analysts.”

Technically, Kerry’s position is with the State Department. A *Boston Herald* query to James Rosenbaum, the head of statutory compliance for the State Department, claimed that names were redacted because they “considered the foreseeable harm standard” and concluded that releasing those names “would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of an individual’s personal privacy.”

All but one of Kerry’s staffers earn at least six figures, with several top aides earning at least \$186,000 per year. The office’s [web page](#) lists two deputy special envoys for climate — Rick Duke and Sue Biniatz — but no other staffers are mentioned.

Ever since being named the SPEC — or “climate czar,” as some call him — Kerry has been extremely [reticent](#) about releasing staff names. In August of 2022, SPEC office emails surfaced showing that office staff requested meetings with Kerry that needed to be kept off “paper.”

“I would also suggest a call or meeting soon with jk [John Kerry] to update him on FY22 and 23, focusing on all the elements we can’t put on paper,” read an email from an unnamed staffer obtained by government watchdog group Protect the Public Trust (PPT).

Kerry’s office is clearly not a shining example of government transparency. Kerry has informed the *Boston Herald* that he will not reveal full staff details until October or 2024, in the days prior to the 2024 general election.

PPT has [sued](#) the State Department over Kerry’s lack of transparency: “The release of these documents will also contribute to the public’s understanding of the role of the newly formed Special Envoy for Climate Change, as well as how high-ranking officials within the Department are approaching compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations regarding foreign policy-making determinations, disclosures of work on behalf of foreign entities, and potential conflicts of interest.”



AP Images
John Kerry



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The release of the salary information is yet another obfuscation from a department with a high profile as it relates to federal climate policies. For example, Kerry recently announced that the United States is [partnering](#) with 56 other nations in a “phase-out” of coal power. In what manner was this alliance, which affects the entire U.S. power grid and hundreds of thousands of coal industry jobs, negotiated?

Who, exactly, is John Kerry listening to, and why can’t he tell us prior to October of 2024?

“Once again, the lack of transparency from John Kerry’s secretive State Department Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate is not only stunning but, sadly, par for the course,” said Michael Chamberlain, the director of PPT. “What little information this document does reveal is that the median salary of folks who work for him hovers around \$170,000 per year. And what does the American public get for that?”

Chamberlain added that Kerry’s “disturbing level of influence on foreign policy to powerful left-leaning special interests” needs to be exposed.

If House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer (R-Ky.) has his way, those answers may come sooner than October. In a January 5 [letter](#) to Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, Comer asserted that Kerry and his unnamed team have been consulting with far-left climate groups in ways that impact “energy policy, and national security policy” and his committee wants answers, particularly about how the SPEC negotiated the coal “phase-out.”

“In 2023, coal supplied roughly 20 percent of our nation’s electricity and over 50 percent of the electricity in eight states. The PPCA announcement was the latest example of Envoy Kerry and the Biden Administration taking actions under the guise of climate advocacy that undermine our economic health and threaten foreign policy priorities while avoiding congressional scrutiny,” Comer wrote.

It seems that the Biden administration is listening to climate hysteric lobbyists to come up with U.S. policies regarding the use of coal. No surprise there, of course, but they’re doing it in secret after promising “the most transparent administration ever.”

Comer has requested that the State Department produce all documents and communications between or among Kerry, the SPEC office representatives, the State Department, and any climate advocacy groups regarding the coal “phase-out.”



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