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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6150

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December 13, 2016

The Honorable Ernest Moniz
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Moniz:

I am writing to request that you forward to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee a copy of all documents and other written correspondence the Department of Energy (DOE) provides the President-elect's Transition Team, including information previously submitted.

The Transition Team recently sent to the Department 74 questions seeking documents and other information related to various DOE programs and activities. Among the most troubling are requests for lists of DOE employees and contractors (1) that participated in interagency meetings associated with the Obama Administration's efforts to calculate the costs to society associated with climate change, or (2) that attended any United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties meetings. It is also disconcerting that the Transition Team has requested information related to civil service personnel staffing decisions and DOE employee and contractor salaries and compensation.

It is not entirely surprising that the Transition Team is focused on redirecting the focus of numerous DOE programs that promote science and technologies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Thomas Pyle, who leads the Transition's energy team, runs the Institute for Energy Research and the American Energy Alliance, two organizations primarily funded by fossil fuel interests. Just days before being named to head the energy team, Mr. Pyle wrote a memo proposing a number of policy changes for the incoming Administration including withdrawing from the Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reconsidering the Environmental Protection Agency's determination that greenhouse gas emissions threaten public health and welfare, terminating the Clean Power Plan, and preventing an assessment of the social cost of carbon emissions. But, the questions recently presented to the Department represent more than just an effort to change policy direction.

On their face, these unprecedented questions suggest the incoming Administration may be preparing to take arbitrary action against civil servants and government contractors simply because they worked, at the request of the Obama Administration, on issues pertaining to climate change, the nuclear weapons complex, and innovation policies, particularly related to clean energy technologies. The questions even challenge the independent data analysis functions performed by the Energy Information Administration. The potential ramifications are chilling. Federal civil service employees and government contractors may in the future be reluctant to perform certain tasks for fear that a subsequent election may bring retribution. Political appointees and civil servants might view each other suspiciously, impairing agencies' abilities to pursue their missions.

As the Committee with jurisdiction over the bulk of DOE's activities, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee has a direct interest in ensuring that DOE's political appointees act appropriately and that civil servants and government contractors are able to fulfill their duties. In addition, I have a keen interest in ensuring that the approximately 15,000 Washingtonians that are directly and indirectly employed by the Department are not mistreated or subject to intimidation.

I intend to closely follow the Transition process at the Department of Energy and also will be monitoring the incoming Administration to determine whether employees and contractors are being mistreated because they attended meetings or worked on issues in furtherance of Obama Administration initiatives.

Please forward to the Committee all information you provide the Transition Team as soon as possible and on a continuing basis.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator