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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6150

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July 12, 2023

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm  
Secretary  
Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm,

I again write to you regarding your repeated lapses in upholding basic ethical standards in the performance of your official duties. The Department of Energy (Department) recently announced a multi-billion dollar loan to Ford Motor Company while Ford's top lobbyist simultaneously occupied, and continues to occupy, a seat on your Advisory Board. In conjunction with your familial ownership of Ford stock, this is cause for great concern. In order to remediate potential impropriety and restore the public trust, I request that you remove Ford's lobbyist from your Advisory Board.

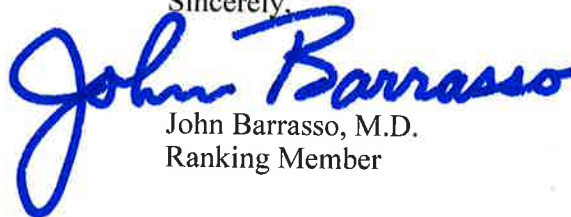
On April 6, 2023, you assigned Ford's top lobbyist and former Department of Energy Assistant Secretary, Christopher Smith, to the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board (SEAB). As an SEAB member, Mr. Smith was selected to "...advise [you] on how best to achieve the priorities of the Department, help identify emerging issues related to the DOE's activities, and offer suggestions for improvements to its operation."<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, in potential violation of 18 U.S.C. § 208, your husband maintained thousands of dollars' worth of Ford stock.

Just over two months after Ford's top lobbyist was appointed to the SEAB, the Department announced a \$9.2 billion loan to Ford,<sup>2</sup> the largest single investment in the history of the Department's Loan Programs Office (LPO).<sup>3</sup> Before funds are disbursed, this loan, just as every other LPO loan, is approved by you, personally.<sup>4</sup>

The totality of these circumstances amounts to, at the very least, the appearance of an undue influence by Ford on the Department of Energy. The Department must be guided by a spirit of impartiality and competition as it allocates hundreds of billions of dollars of taxpayer funds. It is clear this cannot happen while Ford's top lobbyist remains on your Advisory Board.

I ask that you respond to the following questions no later than July 26, 2023.

Sincerely,

  
John Barrasso, M.D.  
Ranking Member

<sup>1</sup> [Secretary Granholm Announces Newly Appointed Members of the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board](#)

<sup>2</sup> [LPO Announces Conditional Commitment for Loan to BlueOval SK to Further Expand U.S. EV Battery Manufacturing Capacity](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Ford Venture Gets Record \\$9.2 Billion Government Loan for EV Batteries](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Joe Biden's \\$400 Billion Man](#)

### Questions

1. Have you sought ethics guidance at any point during your tenure as it relates to Ford?
  - a. If so, please describe the specific guidance you received.
2. Did you ask for and/or receive an ethics waiver to participate in the approval process for the \$9.2 billion loan to Ford.
  - a. If not, why not?
  - b. If so, please provide the waiver in full.
3. Are members of the SEAB subject to the same ethics standards as DOE employees?
  - a. If not, why not?
4. Has Christopher Smith sought and/or been granted an ethics waiver associated with his role on the SEAB?
  - a. If not, why not?
  - b. If so, please provide this waiver in full.
5. Do you plan to remove Christopher Smith from the SEAB?
  - a. If not, why not?