

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

2321 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6301

(202) 225-6375
www.science.house.gov

April 20, 2022

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary
United States Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm:

As Members of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology (the Committee), we write to request more information on the Department of Energy's (the Department or DOE) Clean Energy Corps initiative.

The Committee recognizes that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) granted the Department of Energy special authority to recruit and directly appoint individuals to help carry out the activities funded by this legislation.¹ On January 13, 2022, the Department announced its "hiring campaign" for the Clean Energy Corps and stated it was "ready to recruit an additional 1,000 employees."² According to the Department's Clean Energy Corps website, the Clean Energy Corps will focus on "deploying next generation clean energy technology" and "will help America meet its goals of a carbon-free power sector in 2035 and a decarbonized economy in 2050."³

With the IIJA's infusion of billions of taxpayer dollars into the Department and the Energy Act of 2020's⁴ reauthorization of numerous DOE programs, the Committee must engage in active oversight to ensure responsible management of our Federal investments in energy research and development activities. The addition of 1,000 new employees will substantially increase the size of the Department's workforce. Clear communication with Congress regarding this initiative, which the Department describes as "the largest DOE staff expansion in more than four decades," is critical.

¹ Pub. L. No. 117-58, div. J § 301, 135 Stat. 429, 1379 (2021).

² DEP'T OF ENERGY, *DOE Kicks Off Recruitment to Support Implementation of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law*, Jan. 13, 2022, <https://www.energy.gov/articles/doe-kicks-recruitment-support-implementation-bipartisan-infrastructure-law> (last visited Mar. 16, 2022).

³ DEP'T OF ENERGY, *Clean Energy Corps*, <https://www.energy.gov/CleanEnergyCorps> (last visited Mar. 16, 2022).

⁴ Pub. L. No. 116-260, div. J (2020).

The Clean Energy Corps, as described by the Department’s website, is a massive hiring initiative with grandiose goals and few specifics. As the Committee tasked with oversight of the Department’s critical research and development programs, we are concerned that the Clean Energy Corps lacks strategy and focus. We are disturbed that the Department is moving to implement this program before sharing important information with Congress. If poorly implemented, the Clean Energy Corps has the potential to be a significant waste of taxpayer dollars that, instead of furthering the Department’s work to develop clean energy solutions, will drain resources and focus from critical research activities.

Members of the Committee have attempted to learn more about the Clean Energy Corps from the Department, but many questions remain unanswered. At a March 8, 2022 Committee hearing, “Federal Climate Adaptation and Resilience for the 21st Century,” Members discussed this issue with DOE’s Director of the Office of Management and Chief Sustainability Officer Ingrid Kolb.⁵ Ranking Member Lucas asked Director Kolb how the Clean Energy Corp’s activities would be unique, given the Department’s already existing mission to develop clean energy technologies.⁶ While Director Kolb explained that the Department required additional employees to implement the IJA, she provided no justification for the specific number of 1,000 additional hires or explanation of how the Department would position these new employees in its various program offices. Ranking Member Lucas reiterated that the decision to hire a specific number of employees could cause bureaucratic challenges and distract from the Department’s other missions.⁷ He also questioned whether this hiring effort would duplicate or clash with the work of other agencies, but Director Kolb’s response did not address how the Department would attempt to prevent this.⁸ Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Environment Stephanie Bice also voiced concerns that this initiative would siphon funding away from critical activities and pressed for more information on the cost of this effort, but Director Kolb was unable to provide an answer.⁹ We appreciate Director Kolb’s testimony, but we nevertheless have a number of outstanding oversight concerns and expect other senior leadership in the Department to provide detailed answers.

As such, we request more information on the Clean Energy Corps. We ask that your office facilitate a briefing for Committee staff to provide an update on this hiring initiative by May 4, 2022. Additionally, please provide to the Committee a response to the following questions by no later than May 20, 2022:

1. How did DOE assess its current workforce to determine its hiring needs?

⁵ *Federal Climate Adaptation and Resilience for the 21st Century: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Sci, Space, and Tech.*, 117th Cong. (2022).

⁶ *See id.* (exchange between Frank Lucas, Ranking Member, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology and Ingrid Kolb, Director of the Office of Management and Chief Sustainability Officer, Department of Energy).

⁷ *See id.*

⁸ *See id.*

⁹ *See id.* (exchange between Stephanie Bice, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Environment, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology and Ingrid Kolb, Director of the Office of Management and Chief Sustainability Officer, Department of Energy).

- a. Which specific officials or employees participated in this process? Please provide their names and job titles.
 - b. Under which specific program offices at DOE will members of the Clean Energy Corps work?
2. The IJJA requires that the Secretary of Energy make a determination “that there is a severe shortage of candidates or a critical hiring need for particular positions,”¹⁰ in order to utilize this direct hiring authority.
 - a. Please describe DOE’s process for making this decision.
 - b. Which specific officials or employees were involved with this process? Please provided their names and job titles.
3. DOE states it will hire an additional 1,000 employees. Has DOE identified 1,000 specific positions it intends to fill? If so, please provide a list of these to the Committee.
4. According to DOE, the Clean Energy Corps will also include “current staff” in addition to new hires.
 - a. Which “current staff” will be considered members of the Clean Energy Corps, and how were these employees identified? Please provide a list of their names and job titles to the Committee.
 - b. How many employees will the Clean Energy Corps ultimately include, taking into account the 1,000 additional employees DOE announced plans to hire and the “current staff”?
5. DOE has launched an “Applicant Portal” as part of its “streamlined application process.” Which specific officials or employees will participate in the review of applications? Please provide their names and job titles.
6. DOE’s website states that “many opportunities offer the ability to work remotely.” Will these employees be able to permanently work remotely? If so, please list all positions that DOE has determined are eligible for permanent remote work, as of the date of this letter.
7. DOE stated, “Staff positions are available across the country.”¹¹ At which DOE or contractor sites will members of the Clean Energy Corps work?
8. Given the large number of new hires, what steps is DOE taking to ensure that applicable ethics laws and regulations are followed?

¹⁰ Pub. L. No. 117-58, div. J § 301, 135 Stat. 429, 1379 (2021).

¹¹ DEP’T OF ENERGY, *supra* note 3.

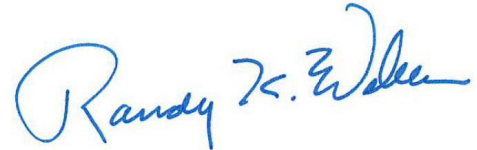
9. Did DOE consult any other Federal agencies or entities in the process of determining its hiring needs? If so, which ones?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. For any questions on this request, please contact the Committee's Minority staff at (202) 225-6371.

Sincerely,



Frank D. Lucas
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space,
and Technology



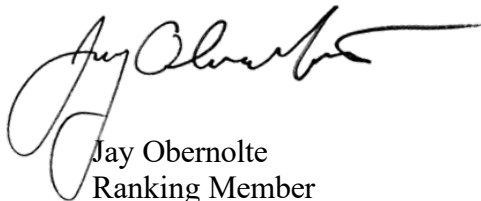
Randy Weber
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy



Stephanie Bice
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment



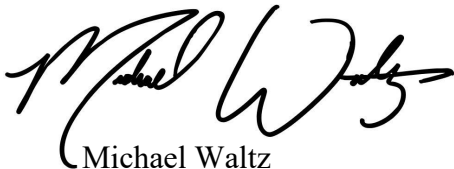
Randy Feenstra
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Research
and Technology



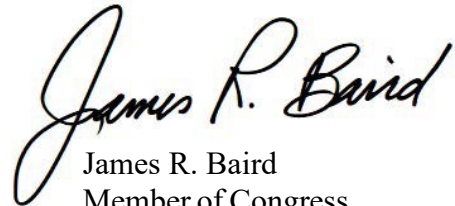
Jay Obernolte
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Investigations
and Oversight



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Michael Waltz
Member of Congress



James R. Baird
Member of Congress



Mike Garcia
Member of Congress



Young Kim
Member of Congress



Jake LaTurner
Member of Congress



Carlos Gimenez
Member of Congress



Peter Meijer
Member of Congress



Jake Ellzey
Member of Congress



Mike Carey
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Chair, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.