

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

2321 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6301

(202) 225-6371
www.science.house.gov

August 12, 2024

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm:

The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology (committee) is continuing oversight of the Department of Energy's role in the Biden Administration's pause on pending approvals of United States Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) exports. A recent report from the Breakthrough Institute, entitled "*A Major Paper on Liquefied Natural Gas Emissions Is Riddled with Errors*," has confirmed and exacerbated many of the committee's concerns regarding the lack of scientific justification for this pause.¹ As a result, the committee requests additional transparency from the Department on the process to update analyses of the economic and environmental impacts of LNG exports.

On January 26, 2024, the Department paused all pending applications for the export of LNG to non-free-trade agreement countries in order to update the economic and environmental analyses that inform whether applications are in the public interest.² Research from Cornell University professor Robert Howarth has been frequently cited by the media covering this pause,^{3,4} leading the public to perceive Dr. Howarth's claim that domestic natural gas is "worse than coal" as the necessary justification for drastic and immediate action.⁵ Yet, as the Breakthrough Institute report discusses in great detail, Dr. Howarth uses incontrovertibly flawed methodology.⁶

¹ Jonah Messinger, *A Major Paper on Liquefied Natural Gas Emissions Is Riddled with Errors*, THE BREAKTHROUGH INSTITUTE (Jul. 30, 2024), <https://thebreakthrough.org/issues/energy/a-major-paper-on-liquefied-natural-gas-emissions-is-riddled-with-errors>.

² The White House, *Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration Announces Temporary Pause on Pending Approvals of Liquefied Natural Gas Exports*, WHITEHOUSE.GOV (Jan. 26, 2024), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefingroom/statements-releases/2024/01/26/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-temporary-pause-on-pending-approvals-of-liquefied-natural-gas-exports/>.

³ Bill McKibben, *A Smoking Gun for Biden's Climate Decision?*, THE NEW YORKER (Oct. 31, 2023), <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/a-smoking-gun-for-bidens-big-climate-decision>.

⁴ Aaron Clark, *How One Methane Scientist Influenced Biden's Pause on LNG Approvals*, BLOOMBERG (Feb. 29, 2024), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2024-02-29/biden-lng-approval-pause-influenced-by-cornell-methane-scientist>.

⁵ Kate Aronoff, *Natural Gas Is Way Worse Than Coal*, THE NEW REPUBLIC (Nov. 2, 2023), <https://newrepublic.com/article/176605/natural-gas-way-worse-coal>.

⁶ Messinger, *supra* note 1.

In February 2024, the committee sent a letter detailing this exact concern, stating “the committee is aware of the scientific community’s research demonstrating the net benefit of U.S. LNG exports to counter global warming,” which “dispel[s] the often cited ‘questionable analysis’ that lifecycle emissions of U.S. natural gas exports are worse than coal.”⁷ As a result, the committee requested that the Department provide any “scientific evidence the Administration [is] relying on to support the claim that current analyses are no longer adequate.” No scientific evidence has been provided that specifies what in the current analysis is inadequate.⁸ Additionally, the committee sent a follow-up letter to the Department in April, requesting, all documents and communication between or among Department of Energy staff referring or relating to economic and environmental analyses of liquefied natural gas export projects.⁹ No documents or communications meeting this criterion have been received.

The Department’s continued refusal to provide the requested documents, communication, and scientific evidence has led to this inflection point, and appears to be counter to its own scientific integrity policy, which has the stated purpose of being “meant to strengthen the actual and perceived credibility of the Federal Government and all Federal Government sponsored research.”¹⁰ As the Breakthrough Institute report stated, the very possibility of Dr. Howarth’s erroneous study influencing the Department’s decisions “demonstrates how faulty science in the name of climate can derail important policy debates, and make the global energy transition far harder.”¹¹

Therefore, the committee reiterates its request that the Department be fully transparent and provide the previously requested documentation, communications, and scientific evidence from letters dated February 7, 2024, and April 23, 2024. Specifically, the committee requests the Department provide the following materials as well as responsive and complete answers to all pending questions by August 27, 2024:

1. All documents and communication between or among Department of Energy staff and representatives or employees of the 17 National Labs referring or relating to Dr. Robert Howarth.
2. All documents and communication between or among Department of Energy staff and representatives or employees of the 17 National Labs referring or relating to Dr. Howarth’s study entitled, “*The Greenhouse Gas Footprint of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Exported from the United States.*”

⁷ Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, *Science Committee Questions Administration on LNG Export Ban*, SCIENCE.HOUSE.GOV (Feb. 8, 2024), <https://science.house.gov/press-releases?ID=0A6CB73D-A8C9-4E2C-812E-D5895C2F264F>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, *Science Committee Continues to Seek Answers From Administration on LNG Export Ban*, SCIENCE.HOUSE.GOV (Apr. 23, 2024), <https://science.house.gov/press-releases?ID=A7C69E24-BBF5-4453-A3F1-096073C28045>.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Energy, *DOE Scientific Integrity Policy*, DOE P 411.2B, available at <https://www.directives.doe.gov/directives-documents/400-series/0411.2-apolity-b/@@images/file>.

¹¹ Messinger, *supra* note 1.

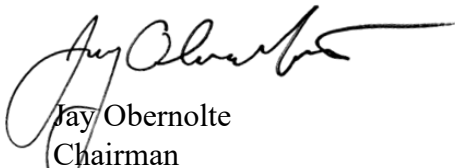
Sincerely,



Frank D. Lucas
Chairman
House Committee on Science,
Space, and Technology



Brandon Williams
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy



Jay Obernolte
Chairman
Subcommittee on Investigations & Oversight



Max Miller
Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment

cc: The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology