

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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May 13, 2024

Mr. Mike Sommers
President and Chief Executive Officer
American Petroleum Institute
200 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Sommers:

I write to request any information you may have about quid pro quo financial agreements related to U.S. energy policy that were reportedly proposed at a recent campaign fundraising dinner with ex-President Donald Trump at his Mar-a-Lago Club that you appear to have attended. Media reports raise significant potential ethical, campaign finance, and legal issues that would flow from the effective sale of American energy and regulatory policy to commercial interests in return for large campaign contributions.

On May 9, 2024, the *Washington Post* reported that Donald Trump held a 20-person “Energy Round Table” with top oil and gas executives at his Mar-a-Lago Club on April 11, 2024.¹ He reportedly solicited \$1 billion in campaign contributions from executives of several oil and gas companies in exchange for an explicit promise that, if elected, his Administration would end the freeze on permits for new liquefied natural gas exports, start auctioning off more leases for oil drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, and roll back rules that reduce emissions from cars.² According to the *Washington Post*, former President Trump told his guests: “You all are wealthy enough” and that “you should raise \$1 billion to return me to the White House.” He also assured his guests that “[g]iving \$1 billion would be a ‘deal’” because of the taxation and regulation he would directly help them avoid.³

Mr. Trump’s unvarnished quid pro quo offer is especially troubling evidence in light of recent accounts that the “U.S. oil industry is drawing up ready-to-sign executive orders for Donald Trump aimed at pushing natural gas exports, cutting drilling costs and increasing

¹ *What Trump Promised Oil CEOs As He Asked Them to Steer \$1Billion to His Campaign*, Washington Post (May 9, 2024) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/05/09/trump-oil-industry-campaign-money/).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

offshore oil leases in case he wins a second term.”⁴ These preparatory actions suggest that certain oil and gas companies, which have a track record of using deceitful tactics to undermine effective climate policy, may have already accepted or facilitated Mr. Trump’s explicit corrupt bargain.⁵

We know that when Mr. Trump was in office, he accepted at least \$7.8 million from Kings, Princes, and foreign states, including the People’s Republic of China and Saudi Arabia, in blatant violation of the Constitution’s Foreign Emoluments Clause, and rendered a sequence of foreign policy favors to his patrons, as set forth in the recent Committee Democratic staff report, *White House for Sale: How Princes, Prime Ministers, and Premiers Paid Off President Trump*.⁶ Thus, these reports of a solicitation of payments in exchange for an explicit promise of specific future official actions are both highly credible and consistent with past behavior.

To assist us in our review of this matter, please provide responses to the following requests by May 27, 2024:

1. Please provide the names and titles of any individuals from your company who attended an event on or about April 11, 2024, at Mar-a-Lago. In addition, please provide the names and affiliations of all other attendees.
2. Please provide copies of any materials distributed or shared with attendees by any participant or entity during, in advance of, or following the event.
3. Please provide a description of all policy proposals discussed at the event, including but not limited to any promises by Donald Trump regarding official actions by a future Trump Administration.
4. Please provide a description of any discussions related to campaign contributions at the event, including but not limited to any solicitations by Donald Trump.
5. Please provide a copy of any draft executive orders or policy paperwork prepared by any officers, employees, or agents of your company that were provided or are intended to be provided to Donald Trump or any individuals affiliated with his campaign.

⁴ “A Little Bold and Gross”: Oil Industry Writes Executive Orders for Trump to Sign, Politico (May 8, 2024) (online at www.politico.com/news/2024/05/08/oil-industry-orders-trump-day-one-00156705).

⁵ Democratic Staff, House Committee on Oversight and Accountability and Majority Staff, Senate Committee on the Budget, *Denial, Disinformation, and Doublespeak: Big Oil’s Evolving Efforts to Avoid Accountability for Climate Change* (Apr. 30, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-oversight.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/2024-04-30.COA%20Democrats%20-%20Fossil%20Fuel%20Report.pdf>).

⁶ Democratic Staff, House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, *White House for Sale, How Princes, Prime Ministers, and Premiers Paid Off President Trump* (Jan. 4, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-oversight.house.gov/files/2024-01-04.COA%20DEMS%20-%20Mazars%20Report.pdf>).

6. Please describe any efforts or decisions by your company or other attendees at this event to provide financial support to Donald Trump or his campaign at or since the event.

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. The requested information is needed to investigate and legislate on matters related to presidential and presidential-candidate ethics and to continue to address the major ethics crisis created by Donald Trump’s efforts to profit off the presidency.⁷

An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to this request. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact the Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Very truly yours,

Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman

⁷ E.g., Democratic Staff, House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, *White House for Sale: How Princes, Prime Ministers, and Premiers Paid Off President Trump* (Jan. 4, 2024) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-oversight.house.gov/files/2024-01-04.COA%20DEMS%20-%20Mazars%20Report.pdf>).