

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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February 14, 2011

The Honorable Carol Browner
Director
White House Office of Energy and Climate Change Policy
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Ms. Browner:

In November, the Office of Inspector General at the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOIOIG), issued a Report of Investigation - Federal Moratorium on Deepwater Drilling, Case No. PI-PI-10-0562-I. The Report was a result of requests from Congress calling on DOIOIG to investigate allegations that DOI officials misrepresented the position of a group of scientists and experts as supportive of a 6-month moratorium on deepwater drilling in the Gulf of Mexico.

The scientists took exception to language in the Executive Summary to the DOI report titled "Increased Safety Measures for Energy Development on the Outer Continental Shelf" which was worded in a manner implying the scientists had peer reviewed and supported DOI's policy decision recommending a 6-month moratorium. While the scientists had discussed the parameters of a possible moratorium, they neither reviewed, nor supported, a policy decision on a 6-month ban on floating rigs. In fact, the scientists never saw the Executive Summary until after it was made public.

Conversely, not only were you and your staff aware of the moratorium language, but in fact were responsible for the final wording leading to the misrepresentation of the scientists' position. According to the conclusion of the DOIOIG Report of Investigation:

A review of the emails that Black [Counselor to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar] sent to the White House at 11:38 p.m. on May 26, 2010, reflects that in DOI's draft of the Executive Summary the moratorium was discussed on the first page of the Executive Summary, while the peer review language was on the second page of the Executive Summary, immediately following a summary list of the safety recommendations contained in the body of the 30-Day Report, which had been peer reviewed.

At 2:13 a.m. on May 27, 2010, Browner's staff member sent an email back to Black that contained two edited versions of the Executive Summary. Both versions sent by the staff member contained significant edits to DOI's draft Executive Summary but were very similar to each other. Both versions, however, revised and re-ordered the Executive Summary, placing the peer review language immediately following the moratorium recommendation causing the distinction between the Secretary's moratorium recommendation - which had not been peer reviewed - and the

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recommendations contained in the 30-Day Report - which had been peer reviewed - to become effectively lost.¹

This sequence of events raises questions about the role of the White House in the preparation of the Department of the Interior Report. While the DOIOIG Report of Investigation goes to great lengths to identify the apologies made by DOI Secretary Ken Salazar to the scientists in writing as well as through phone conversations, it is notably silent on the role played by your office.

There is no evidence of acknowledgment by you or your staff for the changes they made that led to the misrepresentation - changes that were sent in the middle of the night, just hours before the report's release. It is also important to note that neither your office, nor the DOI, has publically clarified the record or retracted the underlying DOI report. The mischaracterization remains unremedied.

Therefore, in my capacity as Chairman of the House Science, Space, and Technology Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight, I am writing to request all records, as defined in the attachment, relating to your office's involvement in the DOI report titled "Increased Safety Measures for Energy Development on the Outer Continental Shelf." This should include all e-mail correspondence between you, your staff, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Mr. Steve Black, Counselor to Secretary Salazar, and any and all individuals involved in drafting the Executive Summary to the DOI report. Please deliver these documents to Room B-374, Rayburn House Office Building by 5 p.m. on Friday, February 25, 2011. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Tom Hammond, Staff Director of the Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee, at (202) 225-6371.

Sincerely,



Rep. Paul Broun, M.D.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Investigations
and Oversight

Attachment

cc: Rep. Ralph Hall
Chairman
Committee on Science, Space,
and Technology

¹ U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Inspector General, "Investigative Report - Federal Moratorium on Deepwater Drilling," November 8, 2010, retrieved from:
<http://www.doi.ig.gov/images/stories/reports/pdf/DeepwaterMoratoriumPublic.pdf>

Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space,
and Technology

Rep. Donna Edwards
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Investigations
and Oversight