

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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October 4, 2022

The Honorable John Kerry
Special Presidential Envoy
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write once again to request information regarding your role in the Biden Administration and to determine whether your office is being unduly influenced by outside interest groups. On June 14, 2021, we requested information regarding your position as special presidential envoy for climate—a cabinet-level position that does not require Senate confirmation despite your ability to bind the United States to international agreements.¹ To date, you have failed to respond. Recent reports raise more questions about your office’s lack of transparency and its relationship with radical left-wing environmental organizations.² As such, we request information about the role of your office and your communications with third party organizations outside of the government. Additionally, please take efforts to preserve all documents related to these issues.

While you serve in a cabinet-level position, the day-to-day functions of your office are shrouded in secrecy.³ Reports reveal that an unnamed senior official in your office called for an off-the-record meeting with you to discuss your office’s budget, to include secretive “elements we can’t put on paper.”⁴ Your office also recently redacted all names and emails of staffers working for your office in a response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to prevent the disclosure of the personnel working in your office.⁵ This lack of transparency is troubling

¹ Letter from James Comer, et. al., Ranking Member, J. Comm, on Oversight and Reform to John Kerry, Special Presidential Envoy (June 14, 2021), available at <https://republicans-oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/RMC-JDJ-Letter-to-John-Kerry-Climate-Envoy.pdf>.

² Catenacci, Thomas & Keene Houston, *John Kerry’s office consulted left-wing environmental groups while crafting policies, emails show*, FOX NEWS (Aug. 23, 2022).

³ Catenacci, Thomas & Keene, Houston, *John Kerry’s secretive climate office discussed keeping plans off ‘paper,’ emails show*, FOX NEWS (Aug. 19, 2022); Keene, Houston & Catenacci, Thomas, *John Kerry’s office redacted every staffer name in FOIAed correspondence*, FOX NEWS (Aug. 18, 2022).

⁴ Catenacci, Thomas & Keene, Houston, *John Kerry’s secretive climate office discussed keeping plans off ‘paper,’ emails show*, FOX NEWS (Aug. 19, 2022).

⁵ Keene, Houston & Catenacci, Thomas, *John Kerry’s office redacted every staffer name in FOIAed correspondence*, FOX NEWS (Aug. 18, 2022).

and raises serious concerns about the motives behind preventing Congress and the American public from understanding the role of your office or even who works there.

In addition, we are also aware that you or your staff routinely meet with leaders of multiple left-wing environmental groups that may be unduly influencing policy.⁶ The timing of these meetings—before high-level international summits—indicate that these groups may have influence over foreign or domestic policy decisions.⁷ For example, according to emails, your office’s discussions with left-wing environmental groups included talks on an environmentally acceptable “counteroffer to the Chinese government’s Belt and Road Initiative.”⁸ Apparently, no such discussions were had with domestic energy groups representing the oil or natural gas industries.⁹

It is critical that the American people understand what role your position as special presidential envoy for climate plays in shaping America’s energy policy. At a time when Americans are paying more for electricity and gasoline, the public deserve to understand your role in the government, how your office is spending their hard-earned tax dollars, who you employ to carry out your mission, and with which organizations you are consulting.¹⁰ Deliberate efforts to shield your office from oversight are unacceptable, and raise further questions about your role in policymaking.

In addition to reiterating our initial request for information from June 14, 2021, please provide the following documents and information no later than October 18, 2022 covering the time period January 20, 2021 to the present:

1. All documents and communications regarding elements of the FY22 and FY23 budgets of the special presidential envoy for climate, including those discussed off the record;
2. A list of all individuals present at any discussions where elements of the FY22 and FY23 budgets of the special presidential envoy for climate were discussed off the record;
3. A full list, including names, titles, and salaries of all individuals employed by the office of the special presidential envoy for climate;
4. All documents and communications between any individual or individuals within the office of the special presidential envoy for climate and any third party, including but not limited to any environmental advocacy group;

⁶ Catenacci, Thomas & Keene Houston, *John Kerry’s office consulted left-wing environmental groups while crafting policies, emails show*, FOX NEWS (Aug. 23, 2022).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Gas Prices: Highest Recorded Average Price*, AAA (Jun. 14, 2022), available at <https://gasprices.aaa.com/> (last accessed Sept. 20, 2022); Lee, Medora, *Winter bills will send shivers up your spine with energy prices set to rise, analysts say*, USA Today (Sept. 16, 2022).

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5. All documents and communications regarding domestic and international travel of the special presidential envoy for climate.

In addition, we request that you preserve all responsive documents, communications, and other data (“records”) that may be required for our oversight and investigative duties. Accordingly, we request that you:

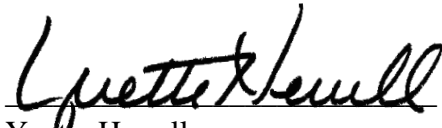
1. Preserve all e-mail, electronic documents, and data (“electronic records”) **from January 20, 2021**, to the present related to the creation of the position of special presidential envoy for climate, travel records, budget documents, communications with groups outside of the government, the names and titles of all employees, and all emails sent and received by employees or detailees. For the purposes of this request, “preserve” means taking reasonable steps to prevent the partial or full destruction, alteration, testing, deletion, shredding, incineration, wiping, relocation, migration, theft, or mutation of electronic records, as well as negligent or intentional handling that would make such records incomplete or inaccessible;
2. Exercise reasonable efforts to identify and notify former employees and contractors, subcontractors and consultants who may have access to such electronic records that they are to be preserved; and,
3. If it is the routine practice of any agency employee or contractor to destroy or otherwise alter such electronic records, either halt such practices or arrange for the preservation of complete and accurate duplicates or copies of such records, suitable for production if requested.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. To make arrangements to deliver documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican Staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight & Reform



Yvette Herrell
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment

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cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight & Reform

The Honorable Ro Khanna, Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment