

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

February 2, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Kerry:

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is investigating your role in the Biden Administration and the nature of your negotiations with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In the 117th Congress, we requested information from you regarding your position as special presidential envoy for climate (SPEC)—a cabinet-level position that does not require Senate confirmation despite your apparent ability to bind the United States to international agreements¹—and SPEC employees’ ties to outside organizations.² To date, you have failed to respond to any of our requests. Yet, you continue to engage in activities that could undermine our economic health, skirt congressional authority, and threaten foreign policy under the guise of climate advocacy. The Committee requests documents and information to understand your role and provide necessary transparency over the SPEC and its activities.

In May 2022, you told the Associated Press that you were in negotiations with the CCP to form a group to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.³ Most recently, at the World Economic Forums (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, you claimed that the solution to changing global temperatures is, “money, money, money, money, money, money, money.”⁴ As a member of the President’s cabinet, you should be representing the United States’ interests. Your statements, however, consistently show disregard for American national security and taxpayer dollars.

You have also continued to downplay the CCP’s human rights violations and its antagonism against the U.S. while promoting climate negotiations that the CCP does not even appear interested in entering. In April 2021, you insisted that CCP’s intransigence “on human

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 Letter from James Comer, et. al., Ranking Member, J. Comm. on Oversight and Reform to John Kerry, Special Presidential Envoy (Oct. 4, 2022), available at <https://republicans-oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Kerry-letter-10042022.pdf>.

³ Peter Prengaman, *At Davos, Kerry cites progress on China-US climate group*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (May 24, 2022).

⁴ Anmar Frangoul, *DAVOS WEF John Kerry says ‘money, money, money’ is needed most to tackle climate change*, CNBC (Jan. 17, 2023).

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rights, geostrategic interests... do not have to get in the way of something that is as critical as dealing with climate.”⁵ You recently insisted that the CCP’s behavior should be decoupled from our attempts to enter into climate agreements, stating “I think the key is that this is not a bilateral issue and that we need to get back to the table because the world depends on it and it could be helpful to China’s efforts to protect its own population....”⁶

Your office continues to ignore requests for information. We are left with an insufficient understanding of your office’s activities, spending, and staffing. To enable long overdue oversight of your office, please provide the following documents and information no later than February 16, 2023, covering the time period January 20, 2021, to the present:

1. All documents and communications regarding elements of the FY21, FY22, and FY23 budgets of the SPEC, including those discussed off the record;
2. A list of all individuals present at any discussions where elements of the FY21, FY22, and FY23 budgets of the SPEC were discussed, whether on or off the record;
3. A full list, including names, titles, and salaries of all individuals currently and previously employed by the office of the SPEC, as well as all ethics and financial disclosures of those individuals;
4. All documents and communications between any individual or individuals within the office of the SPEC and any third party, including but not limited to any environmental advocacy group or foreign government official; and
5. All documents and communications regarding domestic and international travel of the SPEC.

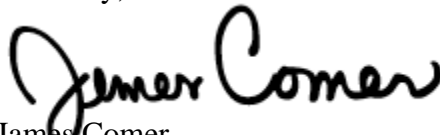
To make arrangements to deliver documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Accountability Majority Staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has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

⁵ Interview by Ravi Agrawal with John Kerry, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, in Washington, DC (Apr. 26, 2021), *available at*: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/26/john-kerry-climate-envoy-interview-china-green-marketplace/>.

⁶ Interview by Nick Schifrin with John Kerry, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, in Washington, DC (Oct. 25, 2022), *available at*: <https://www.cfr.org/event/cop27-and-international-climate-action-conversation-john-kerry>.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Comer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

cc: The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Accountability