

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 26, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Granholm,

We write seeking information on how the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) relied on the study titled “The Greenhouse Gas Footprint of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Exported from the United States”¹ published by Robert Howarth (“Howarth study”) in justifying its January 26, 2024, moratorium on approvals of LNG export projects. It was widely reported that the Howarth study, which claims that U.S. LNG is worse for the climate than coal, heavily influenced the Biden-Harris administration’s decision.² Perplexingly, Mr. Howarth published his study before it was peer-reviewed – at the behest of climate activists – and has revised it multiple times in recent months.

In July 2024, the non-partisan Breakthrough Institute published a comprehensive review of the Howarth study titled “A Major Paper on Liquefied Natural Gas Emissions Is Riddled with Errors,”³ which identified significant errors in the study’s assumptions, methodology, and conclusions. Specifically, the review found that Mr. Howarth used incorrect data regarding the source of natural gas exported as LNG, leakage rates, and shipping distances, as well as an “incontrovertibly flawed methodology” to calculate the climate impact of U.S. LNG. The Breakthrough Institute also correctly points out that Howarth’s findings are a major outlier compared to nearly all other lifecycle emissions analyses of U.S. LNG, including those incorporating the most up-to-date data.

For example, earlier this year the Berkeley Research Group published a study on the lifecycle emissions of U.S. LNG versus those of competing fuels in other countries. The study found that U.S. LNG delivered to Europe and Asia has a greenhouse gas intensity that is 50 to 55 percent lower than that of the coal it would displace.⁴ These findings are echoed by research from other well-regarded firms⁵ and the DOE’s own National Energy Technology Laboratories.⁶

¹ https://www.research.howarthlab.org/publications/Howarth_LNG_assessment_preprint_archived_2023-1103.pdf

² <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2024-02-29/biden-lng-approval-pause-influenced-by-cornell-methane-scientist>

³ <https://thebreakthrough.org/issues/energy/a-major-paper-on-liquefied-natural-gas-emissions-is-riddled-with-errors>

⁴ [Comparative GHG Footprint Analysis for European and Asian Supplies of USLNG, Pipeline Gas, and Coal | Insights | Berkeley Research Group \(thinkbrg.com\)](#)

⁵ <https://naturalalliesforcleanenergy.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/NACEF-LNG-Exports.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2019/09/f66/2019%20NETL%20LCA-GHG%20Report.pdf>

Given the serious questions raised about the accuracy of the Howarth study's findings, we request timely answers to the following questions by October 31, 2024:

1. Did you, as Secretary of Energy, direct this study? If so, did the DOE direct the methodology?
2. To what extent did the DOE rely on the Howarth study in justifying its moratorium on reviews of LNG export projects?
3. What communications did DOE staff have with Mr. Howarth in the five months leading up to the announcement of the moratorium on January 26, 2024?
4. Will the study or studies currently being undertaken by the DOE's national laboratories use a similarly flawed approach to determine the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions of U.S. LNG?
5. Has the DOE received any preliminary results or draft findings related to the public interest analysis related to LNG exports? If yes, we request the DOE to brief Congress on its findings.
6. Since January 20, 2021, has the DOE or its national laboratories undertaken any studies related to U.S. LNG that have not been made public? If yes, please provide detailed information on the findings of those studies.

The Biden-Harris administration's moratorium on LNG export projects is a threat to our national and economic security. It is imperative that the DOE is transparent regarding the process by which it came to this costly conclusion. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



August Pfluger
Member of Congress



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



Troy Balderson
Member of Congress



Tim Scott
United States Senator



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



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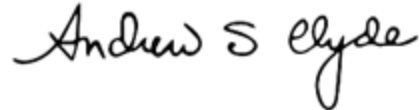
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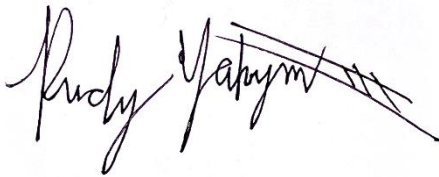
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