

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
MINORITY (202) 225-5074
<https://oversight.house.gov>

March 17, 2022

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We are conducting oversight of the Biden administration's plan to buy oil from foreign dictators and autocrats instead of relying on American energy producers. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has made it clear that the United States must expand its domestic production of oil and gas in order to become energy independent. It is now more critical than ever to ensure the United States has the production capacity to protect our interests. Many European countries became overly reliant on Russian and Venezuelan energy after prematurely moving away from fossil fuels.¹ The United States simply cannot follow this path. As such, we request a member-level briefing on the Biden administration's plans to obtain oil from hostile foreign countries instead of encouraging energy production in the United States.

Nearly two weeks after the initial Russian invasion of Ukraine, President Biden issued an Executive Order prohibiting the import of oil and gas from Russia.² House and Senate Republicans have repeatedly called on President Biden to ban Russian imports. Now that the administration has finally implemented this policy, we are deeply concerned with his desires to buy oil from Venezuela and Iran rather than encourage the expansion of American energy production.³ American citizens have a right to know what actions the State Department has undertaken to import energy from dictatorial states, rather than expanding domestic energy production.

This administration's opposition to domestic oil and gas production has been clear since President Biden took office. On the President's first day in office, he halted construction of the

¹ The Editorial Board, *Energy, Russia, and American Power*, WSJ, Feb. 27, 2022.

² Remarks by President Biden Announcing U.S. Ban on Imports of Russian Oil, Liquefied Natural Gas, and Coal, The White House, Mar. 8, 2022.

³ Anatoly Kurmanaev, Natalie Kitroeff, and Kenneth P. Vogel, *U.S. Officials Travel to Venezuela, a Russia Ally, as the West Isolates Putin*, N.Y. Times, Mar. 5, 2022; Hans Nichols, *Scoop: Biden Advisers Weigh Saudi Arabia Trip for More Oil*, Axios, Mar. 6, 2022; Myah Ward, *White House is Pressed on Potential Oil Deals with Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Iran*, Politico, Mar. 7, 2022.

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Keystone XL pipeline, which would have ensured safe and reliable access to Canadian oil.⁴ The administration also banned oil and gas exploration on public lands and foreclosed production in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.⁵ Even when announcing the ban on Russian oil, President Biden preemptively chided American companies for “price-gouging” and “raising prices” on energy rather than encouraging domestic production.⁶

Trading the imports from one irrational and unpredictable dictatorial regime to another is not sound foreign policy. When the United States previously unleashed its energy production capacity, we saw that our country can provide enough energy resources for ourselves and our allies. While the lessons of the handling of the crisis in Ukraine are still being learned, one is clear: energy security is national security. The United States must position itself as the major global energy producer. Revisiting America’s relationship with maligned dictators will do nothing to bolster our own production capacity or solidify our national security and the security of our allies.

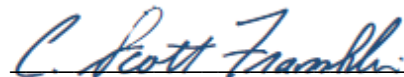
It is imperative that we have a better understanding of the Biden administration’s plan for the United States to rely on foreign oil and gas imports to the detriment of domestic sources. Please provide a member-level briefing to Oversight Committee members to address the State Department’s plans no later than March 24, 2022.

To schedule the briefing or ask any follow-up or related questions, please contact the 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 and Reform



Scott Franklin
Member of Congress

⁴ Jeff Brady, *Biden Order Blocks Keystone XL Pipeline*, NPR, Jan. 20, 2021.

⁵ Lisa Friedman, *Biden Administration Halts New Drilling in Legal Fight Over Climate Costs*, N.Y. Times, Feb. 22, 2022; Coral Davenport, Henry Fountain, and Lisa Friedman, *Biden Suspends Drilling Leases in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*, N.Y. Times, June 1, 2021.

⁶ Remarks by President Biden Announcing U.S. Ban on Imports of Russian Oil, Liquefied Natural Gas, and Coal, The White House, Mar. 8, 2022.

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Jody Hice
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations



Glenn Grothman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security



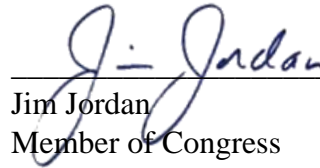
Michael Cloud
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Economic and
Consumer Policy



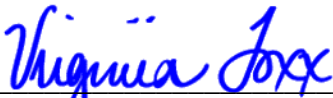
Ralph Norman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment



Nancy Mace
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and
Liberties



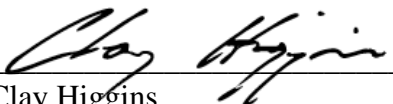
Jim Jordan
Member of Congress



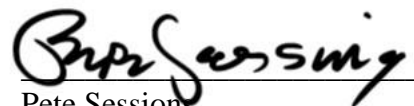
Virginia A. Foxx
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Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress



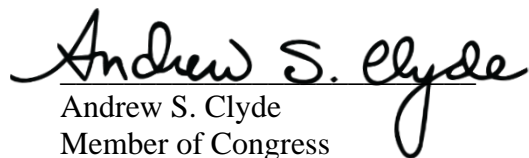
Clay Higgins
Member of Congress



Pete Sessions
Member of Congress



Fred Keller
Member of Congress



Andrew S. Clyde
Member of Congress

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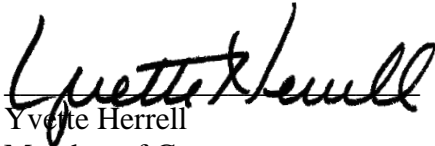
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Jake LaTurner
Member of Congress



Pat Fallon
Member of Congress



Yvette Herrell
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi, Chairman
Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

The Honorable Ro Khanna, Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment

The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Chairman
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties