



**CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

March 7, 2022

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Chairman, Energy & Commerce Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Chairwoman, Science, Space & Tech. Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney  
Chairwoman, Oversight & Reform Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kathy Castor  
Chairwoman, Select Climate Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone, Chairwoman Johnson, Chairwoman Maloney, and Chairwoman Castor,

I write to respectfully request that your committees conduct bipartisan investigations into whether Russia has been actively interfering in American energy policy by financially and/or otherwise supporting environmental groups who oppose oil and natural gas production and infrastructure in the United States. It has become abundantly clear that on the geopolitical stage, energy security, or lack thereof, is a matter of national security. As we have seen by the recent events in Eastern Europe, Vladimir Putin has used Russian energy dominance to paralyze the European Union and NATO, until it was too late to stop his vicious, unprovoked attack on the people of Ukraine.

I represent Eastern and Southeastern Ohio which sits atop the enormous Utica and Marcellus shale deposits. In recent years, the local economy in my rural, Appalachian district has seen an unprecedented turnaround, sparked by the extraction, and harvesting of these important resource deposits. We have seen job growth and broad economic investment in the communities I represent. Nationally, the American shale gas boom has played an important role in propelling the U.S. economy forward over the last decade. In fact, just a few short years ago, America became a net-energy exporter for the first time in decades. There are obvious and significant geopolitical advantages that come along with this status, and it is extremely concerning that the United States has turned away from the policies that enabled us to achieve energy independence just a few short years ago.

It is now evident that Vladimir Putin sees a relationship between Russian energy dominance, and the West's energy reliance caused by the West's "rush to green". The less oil and gas the United States produces, and the more Putin can depend on Europe's consistent consumption of his energy resources, the more Russia's neighbors will be subject to undeterred aggression. It is only natural that as the shale boom took off in the last decade, Russia had a strategic vested interest in supporting the goals of the green, anti-hydraulic fracturing and pipeline movements, not only in Europe, but also in the United States.

In 2018, a Congressional investigation conducted by the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology (attached) revealed troubling evidence that Vladimir Putin's Russia, in an effort to weaken the United States, engaged in a number of actions to assist the environmental movement in the United States in its

**MARIETTA OFFICE**

246 Front Street  
Marietta, OH 45750

(740) 376-0868

**SALEM OFFICE**

192 East State Street  
Salem, OH 44460

(330) 337-6951

**CAMBRIDGE OFFICE**

116 Southgate Parkway  
Cambridge, OH 43725

(740) 432-2366

**IRONTON OFFICE**

202 Park Avenue  
Suite C  
Ironton, OH 45638

(740) 534-9431

opposition to hydraulic fracturing, shale development, and building new pipeline capacity.<sup>1</sup> In an excerpt from a letter to Treasury Secretary Mnuchin summarizing their work, the committee concluded that:

*“US. Presidential Candidates, European Officials, and the U.S. intelligence community have all publicly noted that Russia and its government corporations are funding a covert anti-fracking campaign to suppress the widespread adoption of fracking in Europe and the U.S. – all in an effort to safeguard the influence of the Russian oil & gas sector.”<sup>2</sup>*

The report cited numerous world leaders who admitted they knew about Russian disinformation and misinformation campaigns to hurt the oil & gas industry in Europe and the United States. Among them, NATO Secretary General Anders Rasmussen said in 2014, “I have met with allies who can report that Russia...engaged actively with so called non-governmental organizations to maintain European dependence on imported Russian gas.”<sup>3</sup> Around the same time, leaked documents revealed former United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton echoing these concerns in a private speech, mentioning Russian-backed environmentalist groups.<sup>4</sup>

However, the most troubling information unearthed was just as the American shale boom was taking off in early 2011. Evidence was brought to light that Russia may have been using a complex scheme to fund American environmental advocacy groups who shared the Russian goal of stopping hydraulic fracturing in the United States:

*“Publicly available reports connect the dots in this complex scheme operated under the guise of philanthropic endeavors. The Russian Government and complicit parties have executed a political agenda with little or no paper trail. This scheme allows money originating from foreign countries like Russia to funnel through Bermuda-based shell companies to environmental groups in the United States with the aim of disrupting the U.S. energy industry.”<sup>5</sup>*

Evidence of Russian interference in America’s energy debate mirrors the Russian playbook used to achieve results in Europe. One 2018 report, from the Center for European Studies, revealed that Russia had spent upwards of \$95 million supporting anti-fracking NGO’s in Europe.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, in the last decade, as Europe submitted itself to pressure from environmental activists, it systematically shut down its own domestic energy production, shuttered nuclear plants, and over-invested in expensive, intermittent, weather dependent green energy sources. Predictably, this was followed by ever-increasing reliance on Russian energy to heat homes, generate electricity, and power essential industries.

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<sup>1</sup> House Committee on Science, Space & Technology, *Majority Staff Report: Russian Attempts to Influence U.S. Domestic Energy Markets by Exploiting Social Media*, 115<sup>th</sup> Cong. (Comm. Print, March 1, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Hon. Lamar Smith, Chairman, H. Sci., Space, & Tech. Comm. to Hon. Steven T. Mnuchin, Secretary, U.S. Dep’t of Treasury (June 29, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Merrill Matthews, *Investigate Russia’s covert funding of US anti-fossil fuel groups*, THE HILL, March 1, 2022, available at <https://thehill.com/opinion/energy-environment/596304-investigate-russias-covert-funding-of-us-anti-fossil-fuel-groups> (last visited March 7, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Valerie Richardson, *Leaked Emails Show Hillary Clinton Blaming Russians for Funding ‘Phony’ Anti-fracking Groups*, WASH. TIMES, Oct. 10, 2016, available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/oct/10/clinton-blames-russians-anti-fracking-groups/> (last visited March 7, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Hon. Lamar Smith, *supra* note 2.

<sup>6</sup> Matthews, March 1, 2022, *supra* note 3.

Astonishingly in just 15 years, Europe went from producing more of its own natural gas than Russia could export, to many European countries banning hydraulic fracturing altogether. Vladimir Putin was happy to fill this self-inflicted energy need, and Europe brought new pipelines online to import energy from Russia.<sup>7</sup>

Today, now that the consequences of these actions are so obvious, and even in the face of all this evidence, the Biden administration still appears to be making the same mistakes as much of Europe. In fact, the administration is plowing forward with extreme, green rhetoric and refusing to change course on the litany of anti-oil & gas actions ranging from shutting down Keystone XL, threatening to shut down the currently operating Enbridge 5, enacting lease moratoriums on federal lands and waters, and waging all-out, multi-pronged regulatory assault on domestic oil & gas production and affordable energy.

Many of these decisions are being made at the behest of numerous well-funded, powerful environmental groups who have direct influence on White House policymaking. No matter the consequences, these groups continue to push policies that seek to remove America from the head of the global energy table. This is exactly what Vladimir Putin wants.

I am requesting that the relevant Congressional committees immediately re-open this investigation and build on the important work from 2017. Given that America is importing over 700,000 barrels of Russian oil and other petroleum products a day,<sup>8</sup> which bankrolls Putin's war machine, Congress has a moral obligation to investigate whether or not Russia has been interfering in American oil & gas policy and markets today, and dating as far back as 2011.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Johnson".

Bill Johnson  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives

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<sup>7</sup> The Editorial Board, *A Lesson in Energy Masochism*, WALL STREET JOURNAL, March 1, 2022, available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-lesson-in-energy-masochism-europe-natural-gas-russia-vladimir-putin-11646170129> (last visited March 7, 2022).

<sup>8</sup> AFPM Communications, *Oil and Petroleum Imports from Russia Explained*, AFPM, Feb. 25, 2022, available at <https://www.afpm.org/newsroom/blog/oil-and-petroleum-imports-russia-explained> (last visited March 7, 2022).