

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>

May 12, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Granholm,

I am conducting oversight of a potential conflict of interest relating to your longstanding relationship with Proterra, Inc. At the time of your confirmation as Secretary of the Department of Energy (DOE), you held a multi-million-dollar stake in the company and served on the board of directors.¹ President Biden recently participated in a virtual event promoting the company, raising questions about how the White House selected Proterra, Inc. for a presidential event, particularly when it appears that you still have a financial stake in the company.²

According to media reports, President Biden participated in a virtual tour of a Proterra, Inc. facility on April 20, 2021 in South Carolina to promote the Administration's green car initiative.³ The company is "a leader in the design and manufacture of zero-emission electric transit vehicles and EV technology solutions for commercial applications."⁴ This week it was reported that you received an Office of Government Ethics (OGE) certificate of divestiture that would allow you to divest over 240,000 shares of Proterra stock, but according to a DOE official the sell-off of the stock has not occurred yet.⁵ Despite scrutiny of your Proterra, Inc. holdings

¹ Brittany De Lea, *Jennifer Granholm: What to know about Biden's energy secretary pick*, FOX BUSINESS (Jan. 25, 2021), <https://www.foxbusiness.com/energy/jennifer-granholm-bidens-energy-secretary-pick>

² Brittany De Lea, *Biden takes virtual tour of company that Energy Secretary Granholm held multimillion-dollar stake in*, FOX BUSINESS (Apr. 20, 2021), <https://www.foxbusiness.com/energy/biden-tour-company-energy-secretary-granholm-stake>

³ *Proterra hosts President Biden for Virtual Tour of EV Manufacturing Facility*, PROTERRA (Arl 20, 2021), <https://www.proterra.com/proterra-video/proterra-hosts-president-biden-for-virtual-tour-of-ev-manufacturing-facility/>

⁴ *Our Story*, PROTERRA (viewed on May 10, 2021), <https://www.proterra.com/company/>

⁵ Jeremy Dillon, *Granholm prepares to unload electric bus company stock*, E&E NEWS (May 11, 2021), https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2021/05/11/stories/1063732247?utm_campaign=edition&utm_medium=email&utm_source=eenews%3Agreenwire

during your Senate confirmation hearing and by media reports, the White House still decided to promote the company with a presidential event.⁶ This is concerning.

As the Secretary of Energy, it also appears that you are involved with decisions and issues that directly conflict with your ownership of Proterra, Inc. Specifically, one of the priorities of the Biden Administration's Department of Energy is electric vehicle technology.⁷ The White House issued Executive Order 14017 on February 24, 2021, directing the incoming Secretary of Energy to submit, "a report identifying risks in the supply chain for high-capacity batteries, including electric-vehicle batteries, and policy recommendations to address these risks."⁸ If you are carrying out that Executive Order as intended, your ownership of Proterra, Inc. is even more troubling and raises questions about whether the company receives any preferential treatment from DOE.

While you claim to have been uninvolved with President Biden's virtual visit to Proterra, Inc., you have spent much of your time as Secretary of DOE actively pushing a public relations campaign to endorse electric vehicles, batteries and charging infrastructure.⁹ I want to ensure that you are taking your ethics requirements seriously, and not using your position to profit financially.

In order for Committee Republicans to better understand if there is a conflict of interest relating to your investment in Proterra Inc. please provide the following documents and information as soon as possible but no later than May 26, 2021.

- (1) All documents and communications from January 20, 2021 to present, related to Secretary Granholm's divestiture of Proterra, Inc. stocks.
- (2) All documents and communications from January 20, 2021 to present, related to the planning of the virtual visit that President Biden took to the Proterra electric plant on April 20, 2021.
- (3) All documents and communications from January 20, 2021 to present, between the Department of Energy and the White House regarding President Biden's American Jobs Plan.
- (4) All of Secretary's Granholm's OGE Form 278E filings.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Niraj Chokshi, *Biden's Push for Electric Cars: \$174 Billion, 10 Years and a Bit of Luck*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Mar. 31, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/31/business/biden-electric-vehicles-infrastructure.html>

⁸ News Release, The White House, Executive Order on America's Supply Chains (Feb. 24, 2021)

⁹ Robert Walton, *DOE will spend billions on electric vehicle R&D in jobs fight with China, Granholm says*, UTILITY DIVE (Mar. 10, 2021), <https://www.utilitydive.com/news/doe-will-spend-billions-on-electric-vehicle-research-in-jobs-fight-with-china/596441/>

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(5) All OGE 278-T forms filed by Secretary Granholm related to Proterra, Inc.

To ask any follow-up or related 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,



Ralph Norman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment

cc: The Honorable Ro Khanna, Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment