

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

April 2, 2018

The Honorable Scott Pruitt
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

We write in regard to troubling reports of your Washington, D.C. housing arrangement during a six-month period in 2017. Press reports last week revealed that you rented a single bedroom in a Capitol Hill townhouse “that is co-owned by the wife of a top energy lobbyist,” J. Steve Hart.¹ We are concerned that the unique rental arrangement, in which you only paid rent on the nights you were in town for use of one bedroom in the home, could be a potential conflict of interest.

According to records, Mr. Hart is the Chairman of the lobbying firm Williams and Jensen, which counts among its clients numerous businesses with both direct and indirect energy and environmental interests including Exxon-Mobil, Enbridge Energy Company, Inc. and Colonial Pipeline. Specifically, Mr. Hart lobbies on multiple energy and environmental topics for various clients, including Cheniere Energy Inc. on “issues related to the export of liquefied natural gas.”²

This arrangement potentially violates the Ethics Pledge you signed upon becoming the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator.³ Executive Order 13770 requires “[e]very appointee in every executive agency appointed on or after January 20,

¹ *More Cabinet trouble for Trump? EPA chief lived in condo tied to lobbyist ‘power couple,’* ABC News (Mar. 29, 2018) (abcnews.go.com/Politics/exclusive-cabinet-trouble-trump-epa-chief-lived-condo/story?id=54095310).

² Center for Responsive Politics, *Jack Steven Hart Lobbyist Profile: Summary, 2017* (www.opensecrets.org/lobby/lobbyist.php?id=Y0000046542L).

³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Pruitt Ethics Pledge* (Feb. 21, 2017).

2017” to be “contractually committed to” an “Ethics Pledge.”⁴ The pledge states, “I will not accept gifts from registered lobbyists or lobbying organizations for the duration of my service as an appointee.”⁵ By signing an ethics pledge on February 21, 2017, you accepted and acknowledged the provisions and affirmed your understanding that these obligations are enforceable under law.

As Administrator, you have taken a number of actions to benefit industries regulated by EPA, and this news raises the possibility that you may have personally benefited from your relationship with industry. Specifically, these reports raise serious questions as to whether this arrangement unduly influenced any decisions you made that potentially affected the business of William and Jensen clients.

In order to understand whether your arrangements have complied with all applicable federal ethics regulations and agency policies, please provide a response to the following, no later than April 16, 2018

1. Press reports indicate you solicited use of this property.⁶ How did you identify and obtain use of this property? Was the rental publically advertised, were you contacted by the owner(s) or an intermediary, or did you or anybody operating on your behalf solicit the use of the property? How long did you rent this property? What is the form of the rental agreement? Please share any and all documents pertaining to the rental of this property by you and other members of your family.
2. Press reports state that you paid a total of \$6,100 from March 18 through September 1, 2017, is that correct?⁷ If so, what is the breakdown of the payments? If not, what was the total you paid for renting this property?
3. What is the fair market rate for this property? Did you pay the fair market rate for the property?
4. When you were out of town and not paying rent on the bedroom, did you leave any personal materials in the bedroom or are you aware of whether or not the bedroom was rented when you were not in Washington?

⁴ Exec. Order No. 13770, 82 Fed. Reg. 9333 (Feb. 3, 2017).

⁵ Exec. Order No. 13770, 82 Fed. Reg. 9333 (Feb. 3, 2017).

⁶ *As new details emerge, Scott Pruitt's housing arrangements come under scrutiny*, Washington Post (Mar. 30, 2018) (www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/03/30/as-new-details-emerge-scott-pruitts-housing-arrangements-come-under-scrutiny/?utm_term=.4dde5407e9d2).

⁷ *EPA Chief's \$50-a-Night Rental Raises White House Angst*, Bloomberg Politics (Mar. 30, 2018) (www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-30/epa-chief-s-50-a-night-rental-said-to-raise-white-house-angst).

5. Press reports suggest that your lease only granted you access to the one bedroom, is this indeed the case?⁸ On your nights staying at the home, did you ever have access to the other areas of the house?
6. Press reports also indicate that your daughter stayed at the home for a time in another bedroom in the house.⁹ Was this bedroom paid for as part of your lease or a separate lease with the owners? If not, how would you explain that this was not a gift?
7. Is the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) aware of this rental? Did it review or approve your use of this property before you began staying at the property or entered into an agreement for use of the property? If so, did OGE raise any concerns about the unique arrangement or were they aware that you, or members of your family, might be using other areas of the house besides the one bedroom where you stayed?
8. Did any EPA ethics official review or approve your use of this property before you began staying at the property or entered into an agreement for use of the property? If so, did any EPA ethics official raise any concerns about the unique arrangement or were they aware that you, or members of your family, might be using other areas of the house besides the one bedroom where you stayed?
9. Press reports suggest you spent four days last December in Morocco where you “talked with officials about their interest in importing natural gas”¹⁰ despite the fact that EPA has no role in overseeing or promoting, U.S. natural gas exports. Williams and Jensen represents a number of clients in the natural gas industry and J. Steven Hart specifically represented Cheniere Energy, Inc. a producer and exporter of liquefied natural gas.¹¹ Were you living at this property during the period in which this trip was conceived, planned or undertaken? Did you or any other EPA political appointees have any conversations with Mr. Hart or other William and Jensen lobbyists regarding the natural gas interests of any of their clients or your trip to Morocco?

⁸ *EPA Chief's \$50-a-Night Rental Raises White House Angst*, Bloomberg Politics (Mar. 30, 2018) (www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-30/epa-chief-s-50-a-night-rental-said-to-raise-white-house-angst).

⁹ *EPA chief Pruitt joined by family in condo tied to lobbyist 'power couple,'* ABC News (Mar. 31, 2018) (abcnews.go.com/Politics/exclusive-epa-chief-pruitt-joined-family-condo-tied/story?id=54125092); *Scott Pruitt, E.P.A. Chief, Rented Residence From Wife of Energy Lobbyist*, New York Times (Mar. 30, 2018) (www.nytimes.com/2018/03/30/climate/scott-pruitt-epa-rental.html).

¹⁰ *Scott Pruitt and a crew of EPA aides just spent four days in Morocco promoting natural gas*, Washington Post (Dec. 13, 2017).

¹¹ *Scott Pruitt, E.P.A. Chief, Rented Residence From Wife of Energy Lobbyist*, New York Times (Mar. 30, 2018) (www.nytimes.com/2018/03/30/climate/scott-pruitt-epa-rental.html).

The Honorable Scott Pruitt
April 2, 2018
Page 4

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter. If you have questions, please contact Caitlin Haberman or Jon Monger of the Democratic Committee staff at (202) 225-3641.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations



Paul D. Tonko
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment

Cc: The Honorable Greg Walden, Chairman
The Honorable Gregg Harper, Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
The Honorable John Shimkus, Chairman, Subcommittee on Environment