



# USA TODAY review uncovers support for energy loans

By Gregory Korte, USA TODAY

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WASHINGTON – Republican members of Congress investigating federal loan guarantees to now-bankrupt energy companies told Energy Secretary Steven Chu last week that they never asked him to speed up similar projects in their states.

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But that's exactly what some did, according to a review of 484 congressional support letters obtained by USA TODAY. Some letters, for example, urged quick approval of a \$2 billion loan guarantee for the American Centrifuge, a uranium enrichment project projected to create hundreds of jobs in states including Ohio, Pennsylvania and Tennessee.

"It is imperative that this application move forward now," said a letter signed by five members of Congress, including Rep. Joe Pitts, R-Pa.

"Any delays put the project at risk," said a letter to the Office of Management and Budget signed by 15 members, including Rep. Scott DesJarlais, R-Tenn., and Rep. Sue Myrick, R-N.C.

And even as late as Nov. 4, DesJarlais signed on to another letter saying "quick action is paramount" and asking for "immediate action on funding."

That was two months after the bankruptcy of solar panel maker Solyndra despite a \$535 million federal loan guarantee. Solyndra's failure prompted Congress to hold hearings about pressure by the [White House](#) to speed up a decision on the loan guarantee so that [Vice President Biden](#) could announce it.

At one hearing last Nov. 17, Chu testified that he had received nearly 500 letters from members of Congress supporting the loan programs. "We appreciate the support that the loan programs receive from many members of Congress who have urged us to accelerate our efforts and to fund worthy projects in their states," he told a House subcommittee.

But in a letter to Chu last week, 19 [GOP](#) members of Congress — including Pitts, DesJarlais and Myrick — defended those letters, accusing Chu of "intentionally making misguided and far-reaching statements to cover your own failures."

"These letters should in no way give you and your staff the belief that members are specifically asking you to 'accelerate' taxpayer funds and push them out the door without proper oversight," they wrote.

Rep. [Marsha Blackburn](#), R-Tenn., crafted that letter. She said in an interview that the main point was to request information about the decision-making process that led to the failed loans. And while she did not send letters supporting loan guarantees, she also defended members who did write Chu.

"He ought to go back and look at the dates on those letters," Blackburn said. If they were sent before Sept. 6, 2011 — the date of Solyndra's bankruptcy — they "went on behalf of a company in a member's district looking to receive fair consideration for available federal funding."

A spokeswoman for Myrick noted the loan guarantee application she supported was pending for three years and "it's not unreasonable to ask for a 'yes' or 'no'" after so long. "That being said, the letter in no way asks that 'rapid consideration' be given at the expense of taxpayer dollars or proper oversight by OMB," Myrick aide Taylor Stanford said in an e-mail.

The 19 House Republicans, including six members of the House committee investigating the loan guarantees, also said they no longer support the program and want the money returned to the Treasury.

To DesJarlais, that includes the loan guarantee he once supported for USEC Inc., whose

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By Paul J. Richards, AFP/Getty Images

Energy Secretary Steven Chu testified that he received letters from members of Congress supporting loan programs.

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American Centrifuge project would create jobs in neighboring [Oak Ridge](#), Tenn.

"Unfortunately, it has become painfully evident that DOE either cannot or will not properly administer this loan guarantee program," he said in a statement. Though he still supports the project, he now wants some "alternate funding mechanism."

Energy spokesman Damien LaVera said the letters didn't influence the administration.

"What these letters show is that until very recently there was a bipartisan commitment to ensuring these clean energy loan programs are moving quickly," he said.

One critic of the loan guarantee program said members were trying to have it both ways. "In the end you can't tell them 'Hurry up, hurry up' and then — when it blows up in Energy's face — turn around and say, 'Why are you going so fast?' " said [Steve Ellis](#) of the non-partisan Taxpayers for Common Sense. "If you've got the jockey whip in your hand, it's hard to say you were pulling back on the reins."

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[Add a comment](#)**Warren White** · Top Commenter

The UsaToday Obama excuse/spin machine is again in full operation.

The fact is that the Obama administration/Chu pushed a bunch of stupid guarantees/loans to Obama supporter's energy/solar scams... wasting \$billions more dollars adding to Obama's Trillion+ deficits... Chu and Obama should be in jail.

[Reply](#) · 9 · Like · 2 hours ago**Keith Allsop** · Top Commenter

Operation Reelect Obama has been working triple overtime to find a couple of republicans they can tie to these wastes of taxpayer money. Well done, and we look forward to the next story on the legion of democrats supporting these loans, starting with the guy at the top of the administration. Any day now, right, USAToday?

[Reply](#) · 6 · Like · 2 hours ago**Tom Truszkowski** · Top Commenter · Rochester High

Keith, isn't denie the first of the five steps? You're on your way buddy. C'mon over to the winning side son.

[Reply](#) · 2 · Like · about an hour ago**Mark Goodwin** · Top Commenter · Youngstown State University

Tom Truszkowski - Hey Tom! If you want to sound intelligent, learn to spell. De-Nile is a river in Egypt (joke). Denial is probably the word you're looking for.

[Reply](#) · 1 · Like · about an hour ago**Dave Bloom** · Top Commenter · Graduated LBCC at Retired

Mark Goodwin WHATS WRONG - HE SPELLS LIKE A REPUB SO YOU CAN UNDERSTAND.

[Reply](#) · Like · 24 minutes ago**Dave Magnusen** · Top Commenter

GIVE ME THE MONEY! quick, please. oh, no, no need for oversight, since so slight amount, hah? just little cashy now, and all be good with new power system. obama mumbah one, hey? OK, so, no belly, right? honorable brother in law most gratefully happy now, to take daughter to prom, no?

folks, we have hired a bunch of dirt bags, and we begin to pay the price. plant a garden.

[Reply](#) · 3 · Like · about an hour ago**David Nelson** · Top Commenter

USAToday pro-Obama spin. There is a vast difference between loans. USAToday chose to ignore that the Solyndra loan had been tabled under the Bush administration after Federal auditors reported that the companies business model was seriously flawed and the company has little chance of success. Obama and Chu in their zeal for green energy ignore analysis and went forward. There are several other green energy loan programs on the rocks as well.

And, with Solyndra and the other green energy loans the government was picking winners and losers, which the other loans were not. In Solyndra's case it was using federal loan money to cover the cost of solar panels they were making for \$8 a panel and selling for \$4 a panel. Solyndra's model was to gain market share and then sell panels at a profit.

[Reply](#) · 1 · Like · 59 minutes ago**Tim Mash** · Las Vegas, Nevada

Chu, just said last week he done nothing to bring gas prices down. Obama has said he wants electricity price to skyrocket. The left wants nothing but green energy, the problem is we are many many years away from this. Should we sacrifice our generation and the next generation to a substandard living to make the far left extreme environmentalist happy?

[Reply](#) · Like · 38 minutes ago**Dave Bloom** · Top Commenter · Graduated LBCC at Retired

nAW LETS JUST LET THE TEAPUBS SELL THEM REBREATHERS - IF YOU WANT THAT MOVE TO MEXICO CITY. sMOG HEAD

[Reply](#) · Like · 20 minutes ago**Daniel Hamilton** · Top Commenter

where the hell did you come up with that "Obama has said he wants electricity price to skyrocket"? Hannity, Rush?

[Reply](#) · Like · 3 minutes ago**Mike Voelk** · Top Commenter · Northern Michigan University

Great job USA Today. It's amazing what a little research will do! Please do the same thing to a Democrat where you find it—exposing hypocrisy on either side of the aisle is good journalism that people like me will read. Nice to see that!

[Reply](#) · Like · about an hour ago**Mike Dorman** · Top Commenter

Obama is never to blame.....he's still the leftist/media messiah....

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