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GOP Says Energy Dept. Cut Corners to Lend Az. Solar Firm \$1.6 Billion



A worker installs First Solar Inc. photovoltaic solar panels at the Agua Caliente Solar Project in Yuma County, Arizona, U.S., Feb. 16, 2012. (Joshua Lott/Bloomberg/Getty Images)



By **MATTHEW MOSK (@mattmosk)**
March 19, 2012

House Republicans are preparing to grill [Energy Secretary Steven Chu](#) this week over \$1.6 billion in loans to finance two massive [solar energy](#) projects planned for the desert Southwest, saying investigators have found evidence suggesting the administration cut corners in order to get the loans approved.

"The Department of Energy manipulated analysis, ignored objections from career professionals, and strategically modified loan evaluations in order to force project funding out the door," House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa, R-California, said in a statement provided to ABC News.

The Department of Energy says Chu will have plenty of material with him to rebut those allegations Tuesday when he comes to the Hill to testify before Issa's committee. Agency officials continued to characterize criticism from House Republicans as misleading attacks that are aimed at scoring political points.

Energy Department spokesman Damien LaVera accused the committee of "inventing false and misleading controversy."

"Decisions made on loan applications were made on the merits after extensive review by the experts in the loan program," LaVera said. "In this case, the Department backed loans for two innovative solar projects that will support hundreds of jobs and provide clean power to tens of thousands of homes."

Two separate House committees have been investigating the Energy Department's loan program for more than a year. Their efforts gathered steam last fall when the first company to receive a federal [green energy](#) loan, [Solyndra](#), filed for bankruptcy. This latest review delves into highly technical aspects of the administration's sizeable bet on solar energy and the complex rules set up to help the administration pick the best projects to support.

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