

Steven Chu, Oh Where Are You? (Solyndra Roundup)

Tim Cavanaugh |

Sphinx-like Secretary of Energy Steven Chu may or may not be getting closer to approaching a plan to begin the process of preparing to lay the groundwork for issuing a preliminary statement on the Solyndra bankruptcy.

[TheHill.com](#) notes that the House Energy and Commerce Committee's investigative panel is asking nicely for a comment from Chu:

Rep. Michael Burgess (R-Texas) and other Republicans on the subcommittee have called on Chu to testify on the Solyndra loan guarantee.

Republicans on the panel wrote to Chu last week to request all communications between the Energy Department and the White House on the Solyndra loan guarantee.

The document request is part of a broader effort by Republicans to determine if the White House rushed consideration of the loan guarantee.

The committee, which launched its investigation into Solyndra in February, has already received more than 35,000 documents and has released select emails that Republicans say show that the White House tried to rush a decision on the company's financing so that the loan guarantee could be announced at the Sept. 2009 groundbreaking of the company's factory.

The administration has insisted that it thoroughly reviewed the project, and has strongly denied any wrongdoing.

In a striking example of overpromising and underdelivering, [Politico](#) takes a story that contains no new comments from Chu and some speculation about what the energy secretary might say here he inclined to say anything, then gives it the impressive title "On Solyndra, the buck stops with Secretary Steven Chu." A sample:

Chu will eventually get his chance to explain his role in the sequence of events when he appears — perhaps as early as October — at a House hearing on Solyndra. He can expect a politically charged atmosphere. Republicans, after all, have already called for Silver to be fired and haven't ruled out making the same case for Chu's dismissal.

What the lawmakers will likely hear from the Nobel Prize-winning physicist is an explanation that he's always been the key decider in the Solyndra process, with a record articulated in dozens of public statements and interviews given over the last 2½ years.

Chu's message has been clear: Hearing calls from top GOP and Democratic lawmakers, including during his Senate confirmation hearing, he wanted to break through red tape inside DOE and at rival Cabinet agencies that had resisted getting loan guarantees out the door for several years after their authorization by the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

I love that “eventually get his chance to explain.” Because Cthulhu knows it's impossible for a cabinet-level department head to get any airtime to make a statement, what with the fragmentation of media and all.

As Chu spends time with his family, we may have a clue to why the FBI launched its investigation of Solyndra: an investigation into [possible inaccurate financial statements](#).

The DoE's [impeccably timed \\$737 million loan](#) to the Solar Energy Project is also smelling worse by the day. It can't be a good sign when one of the most prominent beneficiaries of the loan is former House speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-California)'s brother-in-law, and that isn't even the scandalous part. [NRO's Andrew Stiles expands](#):

But that's not all. [Santa Monica-based SEP developer] Solar Reserve is also investment partners with Argonaut Private Equity, an arm of the (George) Kaiser Family Foundation that was a major investor in Solyndra and was involved in

negotiations with the DOE to restructure the failed company's loan agreement. That agreement would ultimately give Argonaut and other private investors priority status over the American taxpayer with respect to the first \$75 million recovered in the event of Solyndra's collapse. As Republicans argued at a recent House committee hearing, this arrangement was almost certainly a violation of federal statute.

Argonaut's managing director, Steven Mitchell, served on Solyndra's board when the restructuring took place, and reportedly still serves on the company's board. He is also listed as a "board participant" at Solar Reserve.

In other words: We have top men working on it right now.

Meanwhile, the *Wall Street Journal* [reports](#) that a new poll indicates few Americans are paying attention to the Solyndra scandal, and most still support so-called clean energy initiatives:

Of 650 Ohio voters surveyed after Solyndra's bankruptcy, just 11% said they had heard "a great deal" about the issue, the pollsters said. They also found that while 16% said they had heard "a little," those people couldn't talk about the issue in any detail.

California voters who participated in focus groups were more aware of the story, but still supported clean energy and considered Solyndra to be a bad apple rather than an indication of a systemic problem. Nearly two-thirds of voters in the Ohio poll expressed similar sentiment, saying their view was more aligned with a statement that problems with one failed company should not stop clean energy investments as a whole.

More surprising than the continued support for solar power is the apparent support for spending taxpayer dollars on it, which the [report \[pdf\]](#) from Public Opinion Strategies has at 62 percent, versus 31 percent opposed. However, I'm a little skeptical of the strongly leading questions:

I hope the remaining 7 percent answered, as I would have, “Both of these options are stupid.” I don’t want my taxes subsidizing private companies of any kind, and I’m aware that the amount of energy conventional solar power generates is modest. But how the hell should I know whether solar businesses can compete or succeed without government assistance?

The only way to find out whether these companies can work in the marketplace is to let them compete without government assistance. In the wake of Solyndra a few companies have in fact **come forward** to brag about their subsidy-free business models, and I wish them well. If anything, the stunning longevity of the Mars rovers has impressed upon me the viability of solar power, on Mars.

Finally, **this video** has been in wide circulation for a few weeks, but seems to be getting a lot of attention today. Joe Biden, you’ve done it again!

