

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 15, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum,

We write to request an update on the status of renewable energy projects that have been arbitrarily delayed by the Department, including halting projects that were fully approved and under construction. The bipartisan Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Interior-Environment Appropriations Act (Division C of Public Law 119-74) requires bimonthly status reports on energy projects. The Department has now missed the initial due date of March 24, 2026, to provide the Appropriations Committee with two reports on energy activities within the purview of the Department. We urge you to promptly submit these reports and to make timely submissions in the future.

The directive of July 15, 2025, requiring “all decisions, actions, consultations, and undertakings” relating only to wind and solar energy facilities to be reviewed by the Secretary and Deputy Secretary created uncertainty about the process for permitting renewable energy projects. This directive burdens renewable energy projects, both on federal lands and waters and on private lands, with new unnecessary layers of political red tape, and has injected additional steps to the permitting process for only one type of energy source. Other energy sources are not being scrutinized in the same manner and the result has been higher energy prices for American families.

Congress mandated bimonthly reports in the FY2026 Interior-Environment Appropriations Act to better understand the Department’s actions. Yet if anything, things have become more opaque since December. The Department announced some renewable projects are being considered, but hasn’t shared a list of which projects those are. DOI also has failed to share basic information with Congress about its unprecedented plan to buy back renewable energy leases, including where the \$1 billion it plans to pay French energy company TotalEnergies is coming from or what taxpayers are receiving in return.

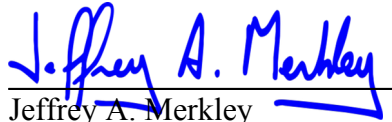
To increase transparency, we urge you to promptly submit the reports due to Congress and make them comprehensive. Reports should include energy projects with offers, or planned offers, for buyouts or other similar incentives or legal arrangements.

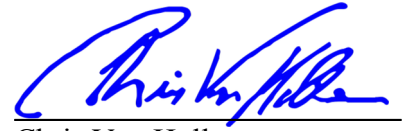
In addition to immediately providing the status reports for energy projects as directed by Public Law 119-74, we ask that you provide written response to the following questions by April 21, 2026:


1. What actions is the Department taking to operationalize routine compliance with the requirements for status reports on the “execution of funds to fulfill the timely review of all energy projects” every 60 days?
2. How many full-time equivalent staff are currently dedicated to energy project reviews at BLM, and how does that compare to staffing levels prior to enactment of P.L. 116-74? How many of these staff work on solar or wind energy project reviews?
3. Provide a list of projects that were already under any stage of review or have requested a review by the Department that fall under the July 15, 2025 memo’s list of 68 categories of reviews and permits that require the Deputy Secretary and Secretary’s approval.
 - A. Please include the status of each review request, stating whether it is in progress or completed, and whether projects with a completed review have a notice to proceed/permission to begin construction.
 - B. Of the solar, wind and battery projects in review or seeking a permit from the Department, how many have completed NEPA reviews (categorical exclusion, Environmental Assessment, or Environmental Impact Statement) since the July 15, 2025 memo was published and how many are awaiting notice to proceed/permission to begin construction?
 - C. Please include projects whose applications have been withdrawn or the Department has rejected.
 - D. Please indicate which projects the Department is negotiating lease repurchases.
4. How much total new electricity generation capacity has the Department approved since the July 15, 2025 memo was issued? Please provide a breakdown by energy resource, capacity amount, and any other relevant information about potential energy production to support the grid.
5. How many transmission facilities, gen-tie lines, and transmission upgrades is the department reviewing or has the Department approved for construction?
6. Provide a full accounting of the funding source, authority, and mechanism for the nearly \$1 billion in taxpayer dollars that the Department has publicly announced it will pay to TotalEnergies for cancelling renewable energy projects in favor of conventional energy projects.
 - A. What funding sources is the Department looking to use to buy back additional leases?
 - B. What commitments did TotalEnergies make as part of the deal?
 - C. Did you threaten to withhold or withdraw permits to TotalEnergies or other renewable energy companies during negotiations?

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator


Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator


Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator