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ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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March 10, 2022

Manish Bapna, President & CEO  
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Mr. Bapna:

Publicly available information suggests that Russian President Vladimir Putin funds certain environmental non-governmental organizations (e-NGOs) around the world to create fear among other nations' use of hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") to ensure dependence on Russian gas.<sup>1</sup> His success in using Russian energy to control other countries in Europe should serve as a wakeup call to the world, particularly as we watch Russia's continued brutal attack on the Ukrainian people.

In 2014, Former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen warned of Putin's dark money machine. Specifically, he noted that "Russia, as part of their sophisticated information and disinformation operations, engaged actively with so-called nongovernmental organizations – environmental organizations working against shale gas – to maintain dependence on imported Russian gas."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, it appears to have worked. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the European Union (EU) went from producing almost 10 million TJs of natural gas in 2000, a higher level than Russia's own production, to just under 4 million TJs in 2020.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, while Russia was working to undermine the EU's production, Russia increased its own production and exports. As a result, the EU is now reliant on Russia for 40% of its natural gas consumption.<sup>4</sup> It appears undisputed that Putin's campaign to weaken

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<sup>1</sup> The Editorial Board, *A Lesson in Energy Masochism*, (Mar. 1, 2022), available at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-lesson-in-energy-masochism-europe-natural-gas-russia-vladimir-putin-11646170129>

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> IEA, *World natural gas production by region, 1973-2020*, (Aug. 13, 2021), available at <https://www.iea.org/data-and-statistics/charts/world-natural-gas-production-by-region-1973-2020>

<sup>4</sup> IEA, *How Europe can cut natural gas imports from Russia significantly within a year*, (Mar. 3, 2022), available at <https://www.iea.org/news/how-europe-can-cut-natural-gas-imports-from-russia-significantly-within-a-year>

European energy security and increase their reliance on Russia was an overwhelming success. This must not happen in the United States.

Former Secretary of State and then-presidential candidate Hillary Clinton decried “phony environmental groups” funded by Russia to “stand against any effort” related to United States’ use of hydraulic fracturing to develop shale gas.<sup>5</sup> Secretary Clinton stated that “a lot of the money supporting” the anti-hydraulic fracturing movement in the U.S. was “coming from Russia.”<sup>6</sup> Further, in January 2017, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence released a report that included “clear evidence that the Kremlin is financing and choreographing anti-fracking propaganda in the United States.”<sup>7</sup> The report also found that RT, the Kremlin’s principal international propaganda outlet, ran “anti-fracking programing, highlighting environmental issues and the impacts on public health” given the “Russian Government’s concern about the impact of fracking and US natural gas production on the global energy market.”<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, in 2019, Former Senior Director for Europe and Russia at the United States National Security Council, Fiona Hill, testified that Russia has been working to undermine the use of hydraulic fracturing in the United States because Putin sees “American fracking as a great threat to Russian interests” and that a hydraulic fracturing ban would “play into strengthening Putin’s hands.”<sup>9</sup> It has been alleged that Putin is using a San Francisco-based e-NGO, the Sea Change Foundation (Sea Change), to funnel money into U.S.-based environmental advocacy efforts designed to undermine American energy production. According to a 2014 report, Sea Change receives contributions from a “Bermuda-based company called Klein Ltd.”<sup>10</sup> which is used “for funneling Russian government money to American environmental groups in order to undermine U.S. natural gas and oil production to Russia’s benefit.”<sup>11</sup> Notably, reports suggest that your organization is one of the top e-NGO recipients of Sea Change grants since 2006.<sup>12</sup>

Provided the public reporting of Putin’s dark money influence in Europe and the concerns surrounding similar efforts in the United States, we write today to explore your connections with Sea Change. Any action by President Putin, the Russian government, or

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<sup>5</sup> Valerie Richardson, *Leaked emails show Hillary Clinton blaming Russians for funding ‘phony’ anti-fracking groups*, (Oct. 10, 2016), available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/oct/10/clinton-blames-russians-anti-fracking-groups/>

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Drew Johnson, *Intelligence: Putin is Funding the Anti-Fracking Campaign*, Newsweek (Jan. 29, 2017), available at <https://www.newsweek.com/intelligence-putin-funding-anti-fracking-campaign-547873>

<sup>8</sup> Office of the Dir. Of Nat’l Intelligence, *Background to “Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Election.” The Analytic Process and Cyber Incident Attribution*, (Jan. 6, 2017), available at [https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA\\_2017\\_01.pdf](https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA_2017_01.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Dan Eberhart, *Impeachment Testimony Describes Putin’s Propaganda War on American Fracking*, (Dec. 2019), available at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/daneberhart/2019/12/02/kremlin-meddling-shows-value-of-natural-gas-supplies-fracking/?sh=115bd7a5462a>

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, Minority Staff Report, *The Chain of Environmental Command: How a Club of Billionaires and Their Foundations Control the Environmental Movement and Obama’s EPA*, (July 30, 2014), available at <https://www.influencewatch.org/app/uploads/2020/10/chain-of-environmental-command-2014-report.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Hayden Ludwig, *Creatures of the Green Lagoon: Sea Change Foundation*, Capital Research Center (June 17, 2021), available at <https://capitalresearch.org/article/creatures-of-the-green-lagoon-part-3/>

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*


Putin's allies to undermine American energy security must be addressed. Accordingly, to assist in our effort to uncover any attempt by Russia to weaken America, we ask that you please provide responses to the following no later than March 25, 2022:

1. It has been reported that your group is one of the top recipients of Sea Change grants since 2006. As it relates to your connection with Sea Change, please answer the following:
  - a. Please identify the total amount of funding you have received from Sea Change since 2006 and include a breakdown for each year.
  - b. For each year you received funding, please identify what specific efforts the funding was designed to support.
  - c. Are you aware of concerns that Sea Change may be a conduit for Russian funding? If yes, when did you become aware and what steps did you take to address such concern?
  - d. Has your organization lobbied against federal or state efforts to increase hydraulic fracturing in the U.S. and, if so, was any of that advocacy done using funding you received from Sea Change?
2. Does NRDC currently or has NRDC previously received funds or anything of value directly or indirectly from the Russian Government or any individual or organization connected to the Russian Government?
  - a. If yes, please provide the specific amount or thing of value you received, the date on which you received it, and the purpose for receiving such funds or things of value.
3. Does NRDC currently or has NRDC previously taken any action at the request of the Russian Government or any individual or organization connected to the Russian Government?
  - a. If yes, please detail what action was taken and the date on which such action was taken.
4. In view of the recent bilateral pact between China and Russia, China's continued support of efforts to defeat sanctions our allies are placing on them, and the substantial reliance the U.S. economy would have on China for materials to meet a fossil fuel free economy, please answer the following:
  - a. Does NRDC currently or has NRDC previously received funds or anything of value directly or indirectly from the Chinese Communist Party or any individual or organization connected to the Chinese Communist Party?

- i. If yes, please provide the specific amount or thing of value you received, the date on which you received it, and the purpose for receiving such funds or things of value.
- b. Does NRDC currently or has NRDC previously taken any action at the request of the Chinese Communist Party or any individual or organization connected to the Chinese Communist Party?
  - i. If yes, please detail what action was taken and the date on which such action was taken.

If you have any questions, please contact Republican Committee Oversight and Investigations staff at (202) 225-3641. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,



Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Republican Leader  
Committee on Energy and Commerce



Fred Upton  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Energy



David B. McKinley  
Republican Leader  
Subcommittee on Environment and  
Climate Change



H. Morgan Griffith  
Republican Leader  
Subcommittee on Oversight and  
Investigations



Michael C. Burgess, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Steve Scalise  
Member of Congress



Robert E. Latta  
Member of Congress



Brett Guthrie  
Member of Congress



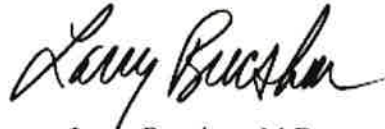
Gus M. Bilirakis  
Member of Congress



Bill Johnson  
Member of Congress



Billy Long  
Member of Congress



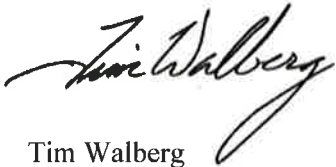
Larry Bucshon, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Markwayne Mullin  
Member of Congress



Richard Hudson  
Member of Congress



Tim Walberg  
Member of Congress



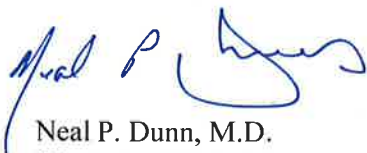
Earl L. "Buddy" Carter  
Member of Congress



Jeff Duncan  
Member of Congress



Gary J. Palmer  
Member of Congress



Neal P. Dunn, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Debbie Lesko  
Member of Congress



Greg Pence  
Member of Congress



Dan Crenshaw  
Member of Congress

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John Joyce, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Handwritten signature of Kelly Armstrong in blue ink.

Kelly Armstrong  
Member of Congress