

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3905

April 3, 2018

The Honorable Scott Pruitt
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

I write to you regarding your December 2017 travel to Morocco. Recent disclosures raise new questions about this trip, and potential future international trips, given your close ties to the oil and gas industry.

The mission of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) “is to protect human health and the environment.”¹ As such, one would expect the EPA Administrator’s travels to be in furtherance of its mission. Yet EPA’s own press release describing your trip to Morocco states that you attended bilateral meetings where you outlined “the potential benefit of liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports on Morocco’s economy.”² Your daily calendars, made available to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, show that you received only one official briefing before the trip though you met repeatedly with industry representatives that could have interests in LNG exports.³

Your one official briefing took place on November 15, 2017, and EPA records indicate it did not include any staff from EPA’s Office of International and Tribal Affairs, which normally handles relationships with foreign countries.⁴ Instead, the briefing appears to have been conducted by non-career political staff who do not appear to have expertise on environmental or energy issues facing Morocco. Meeting invitees were:

- Forrest McMurray, your Special Assistant of Scheduling and Advance, who previously worked on Oklahoma political campaigns;

¹ Our Mission and What We Do, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (viewed on April 2, 2018), <https://www.epa.gov/aboutepa/our-mission-and-what-we-do>

² Administrator Pruitt Promotes Environmental Cooperation with U.S. Partners in Morocco, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (December 12, 2017), <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/administrator-pruitt-promotes-environmental-cooperation-us-partners-morocco>

³ On March 13, 2018, my staff contacted yours with a request that any omissions or inaccuracies in the calendars related to briefings for this trip or the trip itself be identified. As of the date of this writing, my staff has not yet received a response to that request.

⁴ By way of contrast, the briefing you received in advance of your only other international trip to date as EPA Administrator, to Italy to attend a Group of Seven environment ministers meeting, apparently included representatives from EPA’s Office of International and Tribal Affairs.

- Lincoln Ferguson, your senior advisor, who was your press secretary when you were Oklahoma Attorney General;
- Sarah Greenwalt, your senior advisor, who was your general counsel when you were Oklahoma Attorney General;
- Millan Hupp, your Director of Scheduling and Advance, who worked on your campaign for Attorney General, worked at the Oklahoma Strong Leadership Political Action Committee (PAC) and Liberty 2.0, two outside political spending groups affiliated with you, and was a Tulsa, Oklahoma-based political consultant; and
- Liz Bowman, your spokeswoman, who worked at the American Chemistry Council prior to joining your team.

If these were the individuals who advised you about your trip before you departed, it would suggest the purpose had little to do with EPA's mission and more to do with interests from your time in Oklahoma. Indeed, one of those interests may be the importance of natural gas exports to producers in Oklahoma.⁵

Reconstructing the trip from your calendars shows that you spent only one full day, December 12, working in Morocco. You departed the United States the evening of December 9. It has been reported that travel delays required that you spend some amount of time in Paris on December 10, a day on which your calendars suggest no official business was planned.⁶ For December 11, your calendars show only one, one-hour official meeting. Similarly for December 13, your calendars show only one, one-hour meeting was planned before your departure. In other words, for a trip *The Washington Post* estimated cost over \$17,000 for you, and that included at least 10 EPA staff, your official business consisted of one full working day, and two days each with one, one-hour meeting.

The Moroccan press reported that your visit to Morocco was prompted by Morocco's construction of a LNG import terminal, a regasification facility, and two natural gas-fired power plants. Moroccan press reports further name American companies including General Electric and Jacobs Engineering as being interested in this project, which has a total value of €6 billion.⁷

A review of your calendars reveals that you have had several meetings with companies and lobbying groups that have business interests in LNG import terminals and related facilities. They include meetings with American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers, the American

⁵ See, e.g., Adam Wilmoth, "Pipeline and export infrastructure boosts Oklahoma production," *The Oklahoman*, Nov. 15, 2017, <http://newsok.com/article/5572196/pipeline-and-export-infrastructure-boosts-oklahoma-production>; "Lawmakers urge Obama admin to OK natural gas exports," *Reuters*, Aug. 7, 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-lng-exports/lawmakers-urge-obama-admin-to-ok-natural-gas-exports-idUSBRE8760YJ20120807>.

⁶ Brady Dennis and Juliet Eilperin, "New documents show nearly \$68,000 in recent premium flights, hotel stays for EPA's Pruitt," *The Washington Post* (March 20, 2018), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/03/20/new-documents-show-nearly-68000-in-recent-premium-flights-hotel-stays-for-epas-pruitt/?utm_term=.34b22960bc47

⁷ See, e.g., Ali Amar, "Scott Pruitt au Maroc en VRP du gaz liquéfié américain," *le Desk* (December 14, 2017), <https://ledesk.ma/2017/12/14/scott-pruitt-au-maroc-en-vrp-du-gaz-liquefie-americain/>

Petroleum Institute, BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Kinder Morgan Marathon, Phillips 66, Shell, and Valero. You met with Kinder Morgan on December 7, 2017, just two days before your trip to Morocco. Subsidiaries of Kinder Morgan are developing LNG export terminals in Mississippi and Georgia. On March 29, 2018, ABC News reported that you had rented an apartment at what appear to be below market rates from the wife of a top energy lobbyist at the law firm of Williams & Jensen, which lobbies on LNG-related issues.⁸

I view all of this information in the context of your repeated refusals to disclose to the Senate the political relationships you brought with you to the job of EPA Administrator from your time as Oklahoma Attorney General, and leader of the Republican Attorneys General Association and the Rule of Law Defense Fund. We still do not know the full extent of your financial and political ties to the oil and gas industry, which would stand to benefit from the opening up of new markets for natural gas produced in the U.S.⁹ We do know from reporting and public sources that Devon Energy, a large natural gas producer, and the aforementioned American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers each donated sums in the six figures to electioneering groups associated with you, and that Devon and other oil and gas companies were large contributors to your campaigns in Oklahoma.¹⁰ Devon, for one, has already benefitted extensively from decisions you have made as Administrator.¹¹

All of the above raises several important questions about your trip to Morocco.

1. Did you ever receive any briefings in advance of this trip from staff at EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs or the State Department? If so, when? If not, why not?
2. Did you have any briefings in advance of this trip from any other federal government source (e.g., the State Department)?
3. What relevant subject matter expertise did the non-career staff invited to your November 15, 2017 Morocco briefing have?
4. Did you conduct any additional official business in Morocco on December 11, 2017 other than the one listed meeting with Mustapha Bakkoury? If so, what was the nature of this business, with whom did you meet, and why is it not included in your calendar? If not, what did you do during the rest of the day?
5. Did you or your staff discuss LNG exports *in general* with any persons prior to this trip? If so, please provide all relevant communications, including email correspondence, calendars, and any documents exchanged.

⁸ John Santucci, Matthew Mosk, and Stephanie Ebbs, "More Cabinet trouble for Trump? EPA chief lived in condo tied to lobbyist 'power couple,'" *ABC News* (March 29, 2018), <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/exclusive-cabinet-trouble-trump-epa-chief-lived-condo/story?id=54095310>

⁹ Calder Burgham, "Energy Interests Power Pruitt," National Institute on Money in State Politics (January 17, 2017), <https://www.followthemoney.org/research/blog/energy-interests-power-pruitt/>

¹⁰ Oil & Gas Contributions to Scott Pruitt, National Institute on Money in State Politics (viewed on April 2, 2018), [https://www.followthemoney.org/show-me?c-t-eid=6583668&d-cci=33#\[\]gro=d-eid](https://www.followthemoney.org/show-me?c-t-eid=6583668&d-cci=33#[]gro=d-eid)

¹¹ Hiroko Tabuchi and Eric Lipton, "How Rollbacks at Scott Pruitt's E.P.A. Are a Boon to Oil and Gas," *The New York Times* (May 20, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/20/business/energy-environment/devon-energy.html>

6. Prior to leaving for Morocco, did you or your staff discuss LNG exports with any persons *in relation to this trip*? If so, please provide all relevant communications, including email correspondence, calendars, and any documents exchanged.
7. Did you or your staff ever discuss LNG exports in general or in relation to Morocco with anyone at Williams & Jensen prior to this trip? If so, please provide all relevant communications, including email correspondence, calendars, and any documents exchanged.
8. What did you discuss at your December 7, 2017 meeting with Kinder Morgan? With whom did you meet?
9. While in Morocco, did you meet with any representatives of American firms or were any representatives of American firms present at any of your meetings? If so, which companies were represented and what was discussed?
10. While in Morocco, did you discuss the country's planned LNG import facility? Did you discuss any American firms in relation to the construction of this facility and/or the import of LNG into Morocco?
11. It has been reported that you are currently planning trips to Japan and Mexico¹² and my office has received documents indicating that you are planning a trip to China. Japan and China are the first and third largest importers of LNG and Mexico is also a significant LNG importer.¹³ With respect to these international trips, have you or your staff discussed LNG exports with any industry representatives? If so, please provide all relevant communications, including email correspondence, calendars, and any documents exchanged.

I am requesting that you answer the above questions in writing by April 17, 2018 so that I may better understand whether this trip, and possible future international trips, serve a legitimate purpose related to EPA's mission.

Sincerely,



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

cc: Senator John Barrasso, Chairman, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
Senator Tom Carper, Ranking Member, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee

¹² Juliet Eilperin and Brady Dennis, "First-class travel distinguishes Scott Pruitt's EPA tenure," *The Washington Post* (February 11, 2018), https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/first-class-travel-distinguishes-scott-pruitts-epa-tenure/2018/02/11/5bb89afc-0b7d-11e8-8b0d-891602206fb7_story.html?utm_term=.0790b194c4fd

¹³ 2017 World LNG Report, pg. 11, International Gas Union, https://www.igu.org/sites/default/files/103419-World_IGU_Report_no%20crops.pdf