

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 13, 2022

The Honorable Cecilia Rouse
Chair
Council of Economic Advisors
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dr. Alondra Nelson
Deputy Director of Science and Society
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20504

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Chair Rouse, Director Young, and Dr. Nelson,

As the Ranking Members of nine Senate Committees, we write to follow-up on our unanswered November 4, 2021 letter to you, the “Interagency Working Group on the Social Cost of Greenhouse Gases” (Working Group) Co-Chairs, to request information regarding the Working Group’s activities.¹ Over six months have passed since our letter, and you have neither acknowledged, nor responded, to our oversight request. The lack of responsiveness is at odds with the Administration’s commitment to transparency² and its policy “to comply with Congressional requests for information to the fullest extent consistent with constitutional and statutory obligations of the Executive Branch” which Department of Justice recently reaffirmed.³

Since our November letter, the challenges facing our economy from factors foreign and domestic have only worsened. Inflation is rising at a pace the American public has not experienced in more than 40 years. The average American household has to spend an extra \$327 per month to cover daily expenses compared to a year ago.⁴ American families and businesses are paying over 11 percent more for electricity than they were last year. Gas prices recently reached historically

¹ Exec. Order No. 13990, *Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science To Tackle the Climate Crisis*, 86 Fed. Reg. 7037, 7040 (Jan. 20, 2021) (establishing the Working Group and setting forth a detailed schedule for the Working Group’s activities).

² For example, White House National Climate Advisor Gina McCarthy said on January 27, 2021, “You can ask us questions; we can be transparent and accessible to you because we won’t have anything to hide.” Wilson Center, “2021 Journalists Guide to energy & environment,” accessible at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/2021-journalists-guide-energy-environment>

³ Letter from Acting Assistant Attorney General Peter S. Hyun to Hon. Shelley Moore Capito (Dec 23, 2021).

⁴ Michelle Fox, *U.S. Households Are Spending an Extra \$327 a Month Due to Inflation*, CNBC (Apr. 13, 2022), <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/04/13/inflation-is-costing-american-households-an-extra-327-a-month.html>.

high levels. This erosion of purchasing power harms our constituents and undermines our domestic economic security, issues that will only be exacerbated by the international crisis in Ukraine bringing additional disruptions to global energy markets and supply chains.

President Biden tasked the Working Group with developing recommendations to broadly use the “Social Cost of Greenhouse Gases” (SC-GHG) in “areas of decision-making, budgeting, and procurement by the Federal government.”⁵ As a result of your lack of transparency to date and unresponsiveness to our oversight requests, we cannot evaluate the full extent of what the Working Group is doing or how the Administration is using Working Group products to inform policy.

Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine makes it clear that energy security is essential to national security. President Biden recognized the strategic importance of secure, affordable energy when he announced that the US will increase energy exports to Europe. This will both strengthen our relationships with our allies and reduce their dependence on Russian energy. However, the Administration’s actions are not aligned with the President’s rhetoric.

In some of the publicly-available examples we have identified, the Working Group’s SC-GHG figures are being marshalled by federal agencies in an attempt to slow or stop the development of energy resources and infrastructure. Given the need for affordable energy both by American families and our allies abroad – in particular those in Europe – these examples are troubling. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency has repeatedly relied on the SC-GHG to oppose natural gas pipelines and other infrastructure—asserting that these critical energy projects would lead to billions of dollars in climate damages.⁶ The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) incorporated the SC-GHG when it selected the federal land to make available as part of its forthcoming oil and gas lease sales. BLM reduced the areas available for lease sales by 80 percent from the original proposal.⁷

We ask that you respond to the following requests no later than May 27, 2022 so that we may have a full understanding of the Administration’s past, current, and future plans to develop and use these figures.

1. Provide a list of all meetings of the Working Group, including the date and location of each meeting.
2. Provide a list of all attendees at those meetings, including the titles, offices, and agencies of each attendee.

⁵ Exec. Order 13990, sec. 5(b)(ii)(C).

⁶See, e.g., Letter from Vicki Arroyo, US EPA, to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on the Certification of the Iroquois Enhancement by Compression Project (Dec. 20, 2021) (projecting \$3.78 billion in climate damages from 2025 to 2050); Letter from Vicki Arroyo, US EPA to FERC on the North Baja Xpress Project (Nov. 24, 2021) (projecting \$14.1 billion in climate damages from 2025 to 2050); Letter from Jonna Polk, US EPA, to FERC, on the East Lateral Xpress Project (Aug. 16, 2021) (projecting over \$205 million in climate damages per year); Letter from Mark Aust, US EPA, to FERC on the Iroquois Gas Transmission System (Aug. 9, 2021) (projects over \$144 million in climate damages per year).

⁷US Dep’t of Interior, “*Interior Department Announces Significantly Reformed Onshore Oil and Gas Lease Sales*” (Apr. 15, 2022), <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/interior-department-announces-significantly-reformed-onshore-oil-and-gas-lease-sales>.

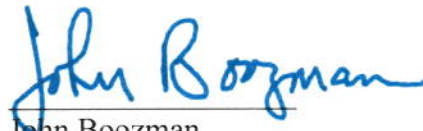
3. Provide the Working Group's recommendations to the President regarding "areas of decision-making, budgeting, and procurement by the Federal Government" where SC-GHG may or are expected to be used under E.O. 13990.
4. Describe the status of the Working Group's activities to publish a "final" SC-GHG under E.O. 13990.
5. Describe how the Working Group will solicit and consider public comments on the process for reviewing and updating the SC-GHG under E.O. 13990.
6. Is the Working Group tracking the use of the SC-GHG in all federal decisions on applications for permits, licenses, and other federal authorizations? If so, please provide that list.

We look forward to your cooperation on this request.

Sincerely,



Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public
Works



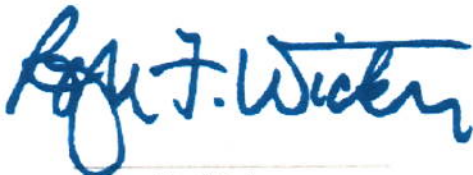
John Boozman
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and
Forestry



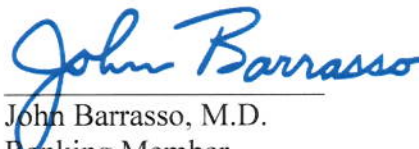
Pat Toomey
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban
Affairs



Lindsey O. Graham
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget



Roger F. Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation



John Barrasso, M.D.
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Natural
Resources



Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance



Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions



Rob Portman
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs

cc: The Honorable Janet Yellen, Secretary of the Treasury
The Honorable Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior
The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture
The Honorable Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce
The Honorable Xavier Becerra, Secretary of Health and Human Services
The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary of Transportation
The Honorable Jennifer Granholm, Secretary of Energy
The Honorable Brenda Mallory, Chair of Council on Environmental Quality
The Honorable Michael Regan, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency
The Honorable Gina McCarthy, National Climate Advisor
Mr. Brian Deese, Director of the National Economic Council