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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

May 28, 2013

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The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1951 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

The Committee on Natural Resources (“Committee”) has been conducting oversight of and investigating since 2011 several Department of the Interior policies, decisions, and activities, including the Department’s decision to impose a 6-month moratorium on drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, edits to a report that incorrectly suggested the moratorium had been peer reviewed, compliance with federal ethics and conflict of interest laws, and policies concerning the development of renewable energy on federal lands.

A number of the matters being investigated by the Committee have been overseen or handled by the Counselor to the Secretary Steve Black. Despite repeated requests, the Department still has not provided all of Mr. Black’s documents concerning his involvement in the editing of the 2010 drilling moratorium report. The Department’s continued refusal to turn over these documents is especially troubling when compared to recent disclosures in other high-profile Congressional investigations, including national security related information.

This is not the only instance of the Department’s withholding information that could be easily provided. For example, the Department has not provided a single document related to the potential conflict of interest and apparent recusal involving Mr. Black and the solar energy developer NextEra Energy. Secretary Salazar approved the record of decision for NextEra’s McCoy Solar Energy Project on March 13, 2013. The request for Mr. Black’s recusal documents and other ethics documents was sent to the Department on March 14, 2013. Ten weeks have passed, and none of Mr. Black’s recusal documents have been provided. The Department’s Congressional affairs liaison has not told Committee majority oversight staff, despite repeated requests, when Mr. Black’s recusal documents will be provided. This delay is unacceptable.

Instead, the Congressional affairs liaison informed the Committee’s majority oversight staff last week that Mr. Black has resigned from the Department.

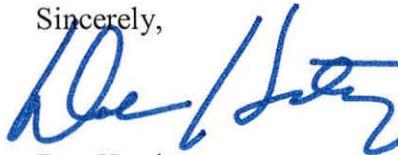
Given the Committee's ongoing interest in obtaining information about Mr. Black's activities during his tenure as Counselor to the Secretary, it is imperative that the Department take steps as necessary to protect Mr. Black's documents from being destroyed and to ensure they remain available in response to Congressional requests.

Accordingly, please describe what steps have been taken to ensure that Mr. Black's records, emails, and computer hard-drives were properly preserved upon his departure and whether any of Mr. Black's documents that are potentially responsive to any of the Committee's oversight requests have been destroyed and, if so, under what circumstances.

Please confirm that all of Mr. Black's records responsive to the March 14, 2013 letter have already been collected, and please describe Mr. Black's role in collecting and reviewing those records. Please also provide in your response to the March 14, 2013 letter any documents related to ethics advice, post-employment restrictions, conflicts of interest, or recusal information concerning Mr. Black created between March 14, 2013 and the date of this letter.

It is expected that the Department will promptly comply with the March 14, 2013 request, as well as take the necessary steps to ensure that Mr. Black's records are properly preserved as required by federal law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Doc Hastings", written in a cursive style.

Doc Hastings
Chairman