

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Secretary Jennifer Granholm
Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave, S.W.
Washington, DC 20585

March 7, 2024

Dear President Biden and Secretary Granholm,

We, residents of communities from around the Gulf Coast of Texas and Louisiana, write to **thank you for pausing the approval of new licenses for the export of liquefied methane gas, or LNG, and to share key priorities that we urge the Department of Energy (DOE) to consider in this process.** Living with LNG export terminals and other polluting industrial facilities in our towns and cities has given us first hand experience of the impacts that additional facilities would have on our communities and the climate. It is that knowledge and experience of the environmental justice, climate, and economic risks that we call on you to incorporate into your licensing process.

We know that a pause on export facilities is only as good as the decisions that come after. We live daily with the impacts from global dependence on the fossil fuel industry. That global dependence sacrifices our families to feed an extractive economic system that might benefit a few folks from elsewhere, but has left our communities disadvantaged and dying. We will keep fighting for the health of our communities and the protections we deserve.

As officials explained to us on January 26, this pause is to update the studies and data DOE uses when reviewing applications to export LNG to non-free trade agreement countries. **This process has to be more than just updating the numbers in your existing reports. It has to be a time to expand your analysis to include the issues that deeply affect our lives.** Doing so will allow the DOE to make a more accurate assessment of the impacts of authorizing LNG exports and truly determine whether more licenses are counter to the public interest. **We look forward to further opportunities for participation in this process and are providing input as early as possible to ensure these issues are included in the initial scope of work.**

Economic and Environmental Analysis

This process of updating the DOE's studies is the right time to finally incorporate an **environmental justice analysis into the public interest determination.** Researchers should conduct the most rigorous analysis possible that includes community input early in the process. And to be clear - we expect that DOE officials not only receive our input, but incorporate it into

the process of determining whether a project is counter to the public interest. This environmental justice analysis should take several factors into account, including race, levels of wealth, and a cumulative impact analysis that considers pollution levels, wetlands loss, climate change vulnerability, public health, and many other factors. In incorporating environmental justice into your new reports, we also need the DOE to consider the impacts of all the LNG export licenses already granted. As Secretary Granholm and other DOE officials have said, the US already exports more gas than any other country in the world, and there are enough export licenses approved to triple our current capacity. We already suffer the impacts of the operating export terminals and are bracing for the harms to be caused by those under construction and that already have their permits.

When updating the DOE's economic studies, researchers must include analysis of the impacts on our local economies. Initially, LNG corporations tout jobs and economic benefits for our communities, but our lived experience is that these are inflated claims at best. In Texas and Louisiana, LNG companies are regularly exempt from up to 80% of state and local taxes. Those same taxes that communities do not receive would be key resources for building up and supporting our regions. Tax abatements deprive our communities of hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues for our schools, roads, libraries, and other infrastructure and services. LNG export terminals sometimes create jobs, but it's not many and they have an optional, unenforced pledge at best to hire 10-15% of the workforce locally. The Governor of Louisiana just did away with that local hiring requirement. Most companies hire out-of-state workers for project construction or recruit skilled people from other parts of the state to help. Local folks get jobs cleaning offices, working security, and driving trucks, all jobs that pay sub-poverty wages.

In fact, LNG companies have wrecked the economies that used to sustain us.

Construction, dredging, and tanker traffic has decimated local fishing and shrimping industries especially in Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities across the Gulf. In many areas, shrimp catches are a fraction of what they used to be due to the destruction of the wetlands and shrimp nurseries, and the massive tankers churning up the waterways. Similarly, birdwatchers and tourists used to visit our coastlines and eat in our restaurants. They go elsewhere now because no one wants to go birdwatching near an LNG terminal or swim on a beach covered in the dredged materials that lines our shorelines. And the smell. People don't want to come to our communities and subject themselves to the sulfur and sour smells that overwhelm our regions. We have lost our livelihoods to LNG and many of us can no longer afford to feed our families. The economic factors that go into the public interest determination must take our livelihoods and local economy into account.

LNG exports also have a negative impact on the health of our communities, which should be factored into the DOE studies. LNG terminals currently operating in the Gulf burn their flares and vent pollutants constantly. They are in frequent violation of their air permits. They emit pollutants like nitrous oxide, benzene, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, and other pollutants that are making us sick. Since LNG started operating in our communities, we have experienced an increase in cases of asthma and other chronic diseases like heart disease. Many of our communities do not have access to adequate medical care, so

these public health issues mean traveling to other regions to see doctors and for extended hospital stays. This pollution is not just limited to our communities, but everywhere up and down the supply chain, from the fracking fields and pipelines, all the way to where the gas is used. Not only do these leaks contribute to our climate crisis, but they make us sick. When considering whether more LNG exports are in the public interest, the DOE must have the data and analysis so we know how many lives will be lost with each export license.

Risks of explosion must also be incorporated into the DOE's studies. Explosion risk is a major concern to those of us who live in close proximity to these facilities, within suspected or known blast zones. Of the five terminals operating in the Gulf, Freeport LNG had an explosion and Sabine Pass LNG and Calcasieu Pass have had cracks and leaks that could have resulted in disasters. We hear in the news that one LNG tanker contains the same energy as 55 of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima. Yet, when we ask for information about risk analyses or safety management plans we are told that they are secret, either to protect national security or the companies' trade secrets. Many of these plants are located in regions with one road in and out, meaning that if there is an explosion, we are potentially trapped. No one has ever met with us to review evacuation plans or safety protocol, and when we ask they just tell us the risk of explosion is low. Explosions at industrial facilities in the Gulf happen with such frequency that we know better than to trust them. Congress tasked PHMSA with updating their LNG regulations, but even that process is broken. First, the rulemaking has been postponed now for more than a year. Second, any new regulations approved in this process, no matter how beneficial, would take 10 years to implement, providing no assurances for those who live on the fence lines of these facilities. This pause to update the DOE's reports is a perfect opportunity to define what the blast zones for LNG terminals should be, to define the impacts that an explosion of a new export terminal would have on nearby communities, and then to determine whether those things are contrary to the public interest.

DOE must also assess the international impacts of increased greenhouse gas emissions from new and existing LNG export licenses, given recent global commitments at COP28 to "transition from fossil fuels," and United States' pledges to the UNFCCC's Paris Agreement. The Sierra Club and others have shown that current LNG capacity blows past President Biden's targets to reduce emissions at a time when all countries are expected to increase their Nationally Determined Contributions.

No set of reports informing the DOE's public interest determination is complete without accounting for greenhouse gas emissions and the historic contributions to our current climate crisis. According to the IPCC, North America comprises 4% of the global population but accounts for 24% of global emissions since 1950, compared to Southern Asia, which comprises 25% of the global population but is responsible for only 4% of greenhouse gas emissions. At COP28, the US urged other countries to "align all financial flows" with Article 2.1(c) of the Paris Agreement and to use 1.5 degrees Celsius as the "North Star" in policymaking and to push energy investors away from fossil fuels. Countries around the world are watching to see what the outcomes of this pause will be, and whether the United States and the Biden Administration will follow its own guidance.

Process and involvement of impacted communities

We know there will be a formal comment period in the process of updating your reports, and we will ensure community voices get on the record. As impacted communities, however, public participation must be much deeper. We are experts on how LNG export terminals impact our local economy and environment, and we want the opportunity to share our knowledge. **We ask that DOE create an Advisory Board or Task Force of frontline community members and empower that body to work with DOE to incorporate our experiences and knowledge into the public interest determination process, along with any new studies.**

This is a critical moment for our communities and we urge the DOE to take this pause as an opportunity to revise studies with rigor, create new studies with the leading science, and incorporate the concerns of our families and communities into the decision making process. As Secretary Granholm has stated, no one wants to live with an oil refinery in their backyard. The same goes for these gas export facilities in our communities. The risks are borne by us - disproportionately low income and communities of people of color that are already overburdened with industrial pollution and excess - while the gas is exported overseas. We ask DOE to give us a chance to have a say in this process. We appreciate you taking our concerns into account and look forward to providing further input.

Sincerely,

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