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COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
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July 23, 2026

Ms. Orice Williams Brown
Acting Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Brown:

I write to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a comprehensive review of the Department of the Interior's (DOI) wind leasing and permitting practices.

On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued a memorandum that prohibited Federal agencies from issuing new leases, permits, or approvals for offshore wind projects pending a review of federal wind leasing and permitting practices.¹ The memorandum temporarily withdrew the entire U.S. Outer Continental Shelf from wind energy leasing and disposition, leaving the status of potential offshore wind projects in question.

The January 2025 Presidential memorandum also directed DOI and several other Federal agencies to suspend issuing all new permits, leases, and other authorizations needed to develop and operate wind energy projects, both onshore and offshore, "pending the completion of a comprehensive assessment and review of Federal wind leasing and permitting practices."² Since January 2025, wind energy projects have been stalled—in part due to a requirement to have Secretary Burgum's review and approval of every renewable energy project on public lands.³ Additionally, DOI has issued stop work orders suspending construction of projects and agreed to pay potentially billions of dollars of taxpayer dollars to companies for lease cancellations.

¹Presidential Memorandum: *Temporary Withdrawal of All Areas on the Outer Continental Shelf from Offshore Wind Leasing and Review of the Federal Government's Leasing and Permitting Practices for Wind Projects*, 90 FR 8363 (Jan. 20, 2025). Available: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/temporary-withdrawal-of-all-areas-on-the-outer-continental-shelf-from-offshore-wind-leasing-and-review-of-the-federal-governments-leasing-and-permitting-practices-for-wind-projects/>.

² Id.

³ "Interior directive: Burgum must sign off on all solar, wind projects," Politico (GreenWire), July 17, 2025. Available: <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2025/07/17/interior-directive-burgum-must-sign-off-on-all-solar-wind-projects-00459755>.

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The Trump Administration has shown a strong willingness to go to any lengths to kill wind projects, including stretching the bounds of the law. It is imperative that Congress and the American people understand how DOI's actions have crippled the development of wind energy in the country. To inform the Committee's oversight efforts, I request that GAO conduct a review and address the following questions:

1. How have DOI and other agencies' wind leasing and permitting practices changed since January 2025?
2. What is DOI's planned approach for reviewing onshore and offshore wind leasing and permitting practices and what is the status of its review?
3. What is the status of onshore and offshore wind leases awarded by DOI and projects undergoing the permitting process?
4. What impact have DOI's wind leasing and permitting practices and other federal agency actions had on wind energy projects and stakeholders (*e.g.*, the ability to meet demand or energy goals)?
5. What is known about the cost implications of DOI's changes to lease agreements and stop work orders on wind projects (*e.g.*, for consumers, industry stakeholders, and the federal government)?

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my staff at (202) 224-4971.

Sincerely,



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Energy and Natural
Resources