



## **GOP accuses Chu of false testimony**

By Zack Colman - 08/15/12 03:32 PM ET

Republicans accused Energy Secretary Steven Chu on Wednesday of offering false testimony on the Energy Department loan program that gave funds to failed solar firm Solyndra.

Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) said a briefing on the loan program's status that Chu provided to President Obama in June of 2011 contradicts Chu's testimony to the committee earlier this year about the extent of his communication with the White House.

They also allege the private emails show Chu was involved in a meeting with former White House Chief of Staff William Daley on the loan guarantee program.

The lawmakers say this conflicts with testimony Chu gave in which he said he did not communicate directly with the White House about the energy program. The program became a huge controversy after the bankruptcy of Solyndra, which received a \$535 federal loan guarantee.

Becca Watkins, a spokeswoman with the committee, told The Hill that it is “a little bit of a gray area” on whether this is the first time the committee has made such accusations against Chu. Issa sent a letter in July asking Chu to clarify his involvement with the loan program, but Watkins said “this time we have the documents.”

The March testimony from Chu the lawmakers cite in the letter is clipped from a fuller line of questioning. Video of the hearing shows Chu's answers were not in response to his communication with the White House about the program as a whole, but rather his knowledge of nine specific projects.

Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) asked Chu during that hearing about whether he corresponded with the administration about that select, specific group of energy loans through the program. Chu responded that he had not.

One of those projects Jordan mentioned was Solyndra, Watkins noted. But documents have not shown that the June 2011 briefing Chu gave Obama about the loan program included any mention of that firm.

In the letter to Chu sent Tuesday, the lawmakers asked the secretary to clarify in accurate statements, to produce relevant documents the department has not released on the loan program and to testify before the Oversight and Government Reform Committee in September.

Jordan (R-Ohio) and Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) also signed the letter.

“Your apparent false or — at minimum — misleading testimony, combined with the widespread use of private e-mail accounts by Department employees, creates the appearance that you have been complicit in an organized effort to deceive Congress and hide the motives and process for decisions to use taxpayer funds to aid private interests,” the lawmakers said in the letter.

The lawmakers also argue Jonathan Silver, the former head of the DOE loan program, asked for staffers' personal email addresses to discuss official business to avoid getting that correspondence subpoenaed in a possible investigation. The lawmakers said that is in violation of the Federal Records Act.

“Recently-obtained documents show DOE officials frequently used Yahoo! and Gmail to communicate about the loan guarantee program,” the legislators said. “This use of non-government e-mail accounts for official business may have violated the Presidential Records Act (PRA) and the Federal Records Act (FRA). The documents also show that testimony given to the Committee by current and former DOE officials, including you, was inaccurate, and may have been intentionally false.”

The Washington Post reported Tuesday that Energy Department officials advised staffers not to use personal email addresses for office business because they could get subpoenaed. Days later, Solyndra went bankrupt.

Silver said in a statement to the Post on Tuesday that, “I intended to advise my DOE colleagues to use their official email for official purposes and personal email for personal purposes. It was never my intention to avoid the requirements of the Federal Records Act.”

DOE responded to the charges with a statement to The Hill on Wednesday: “In the rare cases where the Department has found that some officials may have used their personal email accounts to discuss official business, the Department has treated those emails as official records and voluntarily provided them when requested by congressional investigators. For example, just last week, we voluntarily provided these emails to the Committee.”

Source:

<http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/243773-gop-questions-chu-on-solyndra-testimony>

The contents of this site are © 2012 Capitol Hill Publishing Corp., a subsidiary of News Communications, Inc.