



September 25, 2014

Jason Bordoff, Founding Director  
Center on Global Energy Policy  
Columbia University  
International Affairs Building, Room 901F  
612 W. 115<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10025-7799

Dear Mr. Bordoff:

I recently read of the [announcement](#) that your Center for Global Energy Policy had hired former U.S. State Department officials Keith Benes and Ambassador Carlos Pascual.

As you know, both of these men served in important roles in the State Department's evaluation of the controversial Keystone XL pipeline. Ambassador Pascual was assigned by Secretary Kerry to oversee the National Interest Determination (NID), the Department's formal recommendation to the President on the pipeline, while Mr. Benes played a pivotal role in driving the NID's antecedent, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

During Mr. Benes' tenure, the EIS was turned from a routine bureaucratic exercise into a messy one favoring TransCanada, the foreign oil company that wants to build Keystone XL, at practically every turn.

Mr. Benes' work was the subject of a probe by the State Department's Inspector General, who acted on [information](#) provided by my project. The State Department staff members working on the EIS gave advanced background briefings to the government of Canada that it would get the favorable ruling it sought, as well as to the media – all before U.S. Senate offices were told.

The timing of the hiring of Keith Benes and Carlos Pascual after the completion of the highly questionable EIS is probably pure coincidence. However, Mr. Pascual and Mr. Benes are now employed by one of the best-known universities in the world, with the credibility to impact public and elected officials' views on large fossil fuel projects such as Keystone XL. And, Columbia University declares clearly in a "[Statement of Ethical Conduct](#)" its commitment to transparency and honesty, as well as the requirement that [audit trails be incorporated throughout all administrative and financial processes](#).

I think it is therefore reasonable to ask if your Center has had any communications with or funding from TransCanada or other members of the tar sands lobby that has so aggressively pushed people such as Mr. Benes and Ambassador Pascual to give them favorable rulings.

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As you know, many universities' credibility, such as that of the [University at Buffalo](#), has been jeopardized due to the taking of funds from fossil fuel interests. In order to put to rest any questions this pair of hirings might create, I ask that you provide detailed information about the funding for the Center on Global Energy Policy and communications with the tar sands lobby regarding such funding.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Peterson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Scott Peterson  
Executive Director, Checks and Balances Project

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