

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: POLITICO Pro
Sent: Wed 8/30/2017 9:58:38 PM
Subject: Interior IG ends investigation of Zinke's call to Murkowski

By Ben Lefebvre

08/30/2017 05:55 PM EDT

The Interior Department's inspector general ended the investigation into whether Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke broke ethics rules in calls to Alaska Republican senators last month over their votes to repeal Obamacare, calling the initial investigation "unproductive."

The IG's efforts foundered after Sens. [Lisa Murkowski](#) and [Dan Sullivan](#) declined to answer questions from the inspector general's office, Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall said in an Aug. 29 [letter](#) to Reps. [Raul Grijalva](#) (D-Ariz.) and [Frank Pallone Jr.](#) (D-N.J.), who had called for the inquiry.

"Both Senators Murkowski and Sullivan declined to be interviewed or to provide statements regarding the matter," Kendall wrote.

Kendall also wrote that because the episode was "extensively covered" by news outlets, her office "does not believe that it could meaningfully investigate the matter further."

Zinke [called](#) Murkowski and Sullivan in July after Murkowski had voted against repealing Obamacare legislation. During the call, Zinke said Murkowski's vote could endanger President Donald Trump's support for energy projects important to Alaska.

Interior plays a big role in Alaska, where the federal government controls 61 percent of the land. Interior is reviewing a multitude of projects tied to Alaska energy development, including a possible opening of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil and gas drilling and allowing offshore oil drilling in currently off-limits Arctic waters.

A spokesman for the Democrat staff on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, of which Pallone is ranking member, said the IG's decision to end the probe was "unfortunate."

WHAT'S NEXT: The GAO is also investigating Zinke's calls to the Alaska senators.

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Daily Environment Report

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Leading the News

Enforcement

China's Pollution Crackdown Sparks Company Closings, Protests

China's crackdown on polluters is reverberating throughout the country's supply chains as more companies are forced to shut or slow down for environmental violations and workers take to the streets to protest.

Motor Vehicles

EPA Plans To Repeal Parts of Truck Greenhouse Gas Limits

The regulatory load of truck manufacturers could get a little lighter as the EPA mulls dropping portions of the Obama administration's greenhouse gas standards in response to an industry request.

News

Air Pollution

Emission Fix for Volkswagen Diesel SUVs Backed by U.S. Regulators

U.S. regulators approved a technical fix for about 38,000 Volkswagen sport-utility vehicles with diesel V-6 engines, another milestone in the automaker's effort to remedy more than half a million U.S. vehicles that skirted clean-air rules.

Air Pollution

London Clamps Down on 'Toxic' Vehicles with New Daily Fee

Drivers of the most polluting diesel vehicles will pay a charge to enter central London starting Oct. 23 in the latest attempt by the city's mayor to crack down on air pollution.

Climate Change

Big Oil Should Boost Carbon Capture, U.K. Climate Adviser Says

Big oil companies including Royal Dutch Shell Plc. need to step up their efforts to tackle climate change, especially in making carbon capture and sequestration more economical, according to the U.K.'s chief greenhouse gas adviser.

Energy

Australia Energy Retailers Cautiously Welcome Emissions Plan

Major energy businesses are cautiously supporting Australia's latest climate and energy plan, but its emissions target could still be a stumbling block to long-sought bipartisanship on climate policy.

Energy

Largest U.S. Grid Operator Opposes Perry's Plan to Save Coal

The biggest U.S. grid operator is asking regulators to reject Energy Secretary Rick Perry's plan to prop up ailing coal-fired and nuclear plants.

Energy

PM Turnbull Seeks to Persuade States on Aussie Energy Plan

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's government will provide modeling to the states in a bid to get them to back its proposed "national energy guarantee" to bolster reliability of Australia's faltering electricity grid.

Energy

Puerto Rico Lays Out Energy Future with Tesla, Privatization

A Puerto Rican official who has been in talks with Tesla Inc. said the island is serious about transforming its energy infrastructure after it was leveled by Category 4 Hurricane Maria, despite questions about how such an overhaul would be funded.

Enforcement

Companies Can Trade Enviro Fines for Discounted Eco Investment: Brazil

A Brazilian presidential decree that allows companies to convert fines for environmental violations into investments for ecosystem restoration projects—and at substantial discounts—is welcomed by a range of companies and industries in the country.

Environmental Taxes

Michigan Water Tax Could Drain \$20 Million From Nestle

Nestle Waters North America Inc. could lose \$20 million annually in new taxes aimed at companies withdrawing large amounts of water from the Great Lakes State.

Oil & Gas

Rise in Texas Earthquakes Near Oilfields Prompts New Monitoring

Texas, home to two of the nation's busiest oilfields, now has a new way for the public to track in real time how many earthquakes are rattling the Lone Star State since the expanded use of new drilling techniques.

Renewable Energy

Asia's Oil Hub Going Green with Floating Solar, Storage Systems

Singapore plans to develop solar power and energy-storage technologies as the oil-trading hub of Asia pushes to generate more of its power from renewable sources.

Vehicle Fuels

Be It BMW or Tesla, Drivers Could Stay Hooked on Fossil Fuels

It's not that easy being green.

Vehicle Fuels

U.K. Pushes Electric Cars with Charging Requirement

The U.K. government is boosting its push to promote electric and driverless cars with a draft law requiring gasoline retailers across the country to install more charging points.

Practitioner Insights

Chemicals

Practitioner Insights: Protecting Stakeholders Under the New TSCA

The recent amendments to section 6 of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) mean that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can regulate, is regulating, and will regulate chemical substances as never before. The amendments present challenges to stakeholders, but also opportunities to influence potential EPA decisions that may determine the future commercial viability of those substances.

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