

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: POLITICO Pro Energy
Sent: Thur 8/17/2017 9:42:07 AM
Subject: Morning Energy: Desperately seeking Zinke's attention — Wyoming v. West Virginia in coal feud — More time for comments on WOTUS repeal

By Anthony Adragna | 08/17/2017 05:40 AM EDT

With help from Alex Guillén and Adam Behsudi

EVERYONE WANTS ZINKE'S EAR: It may be August recess for much of Washington, but Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke has a bunch of deadlines coming up in the next couple of weeks and lots of people looking to grab his attention. Today's the last day for public comments on BOEM's push to write a new five-year offshore drilling plan (submit yours [here](#)). Nearly 51,000 comments have already poured in as President Donald Trump's administration is expected to begin the two-to-three year process of writing a plan that would open parts of the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean as well as Alaska's Chukchi Sea, Beaufort Sea and Cook Inlet areas to drilling opportunities.

A group of 69 House Democrats, led by Rep. [Jared Huffman](#), urged Zinke in a [letter](#) Wednesday not to expand drilling opportunities in the Arctic and Atlantic saying "the risks are simply too high, and the consequences too severe." But more than 110 other House lawmakers, led by Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#), said in their [own letter](#) it was "imperative" to open as much of the Outer Continental Shelf as possible "to ensure opportunities are not missed" to expand U.S. energy independence. Meanwhile, the administration of Trump ally Gov. Chris Christie voiced opposition to including any of the area off the coast of New Jersey in the new plan in its own [comments](#). And a coalition of environmental organizations [warned](#) opening Atlantic waters to drilling posed "a direct threat to the fragile and unique ecosystems of the southeast coast and to the millions of people whose livelihoods depend on our clean coastal resources."

Separately, Zinke is nearing the end of his national monument review, and more than 400 executives from the outdoor apparel, footwear and equipment sectors are urging him not to make any changes to nearly two dozen designations under the Antiquities Act currently being examined. "As business leaders, we simply ask that your final report remain true to the Teddy Roosevelt values we share with you — to maintain the national treasures Presidents of both parties have protected, to defend the integrity of the monument-making process and to assure these majestic places remain accessible for all Americans, sustaining healthy communities and a healthy economy," they wrote. Among those signing [the letter](#) are Adidas Outdoors, Burton, L.L. Bean, Orvis, The North Face, REI and YETI.

Monument backers got some good news Wednesday when Zinke announced he would recommend no changes to California's existing Sand to Snow National Monument. "The land of Sand to Snow National Monument is some of the most diverse terrain in the West, and the monument is home to incredible geographic, biologic, and archaeological history of our nation," he said in a statement. Former President Barack Obama created it back in February 2016.

MORE TIME GIVEN ON WOTUS REPEAL: Interested parties now have until Sept. 27 to comment on the EPA's efforts to repeal the previous administration's Waters of the U.S. regulation after the agency extended the public comment period by a month, Pro's Annie Snider reports. Administrator Scott Pruitt wants to author his own version of the rule defining which marshes, bogs and creeks are subject to regulation under the Clean Water Act, though backers of the Obama rule have criticized the length of time the Trump administration gave for public comment.

Speaking of WOTUS, Pruitt appeared in a video released Wednesday for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association urging farmers and ranchers to make sure they formally submitted comments before the deadline. "This record being made is so important because it helps us make informed decisions," Pruitt said, being careful not to specify what the comment should sound like.

IT'S THURSDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and Faegre Baker Daniels' Andrew Wheeler was first up to identify Wednesday as the 40th anniversary of Elvis' death. For today: What's the only country located in all four hemispheres? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to aadragna@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@AnthonyAdragna](https://twitter.com/AnthonyAdragna), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy), and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

WELCOME TO THE GOP, GOV. JUSTICE! Wyoming's all-Republican congressional delegation is decidedly not a fan of West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice's proposed \$15-per-ton subsidy for utilities to buy coal from Appalachian mines instead of those in Western states. "We strongly urge you not to take actions, such as adopting the subsidy policy proposed by Governor Justice, that would repeat the mistakes of the last eight years," Sens. John Barrasso and Mike Enzi, as well as Rep. Liz Cheney, wrote in a letter to Trump. "Now is the time to remove distortions in our energy markets. We should not be imposing new ones." Justice's proposal would have to go through Congress, where Barrasso chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee, and Enzi holds the Budget Committee gavel, and where the Freedom Caucus, which tends to oppose any overt energy subsidies, holds substantial sway in the House.

GREENS CONDEMN CHARLOTTESVILLE RALLY: A coalition of more than 110 environmental and public interest groups issued a statement Wednesday condemning the white nationalist rally and associated violence from last weekend in Charlottesville, Va. "President Trump and all political leaders, no matter their party affiliation, have an obligation to stand up against such hate groups immediately and unequivocally," they said. "Their voices and words — and lack thereof — matter." Among those signing the statement are Citizens Climate Lobby, Earthjustice, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club and Physicians for Social Responsibility.

HEITKAMP LANDS A CHALLENGER: Wealthy potato farmer and Republican state Sen. Tom Campbell threw his hat into the ring to face Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp Wednesday, Campaign Pro's Kevin Robillard reports. He's given enough personal money to launch an advertising blitz, which heavily focuses on his potato farming business that employs hundreds of people in the state. His first ad includes this pretty witty line: "It's time for a leader who knows how to grow something besides government."

ADVISER NO MORE: A spokesman said Wednesday Daniel Yergin, vice chairman of consulting agency [IHS Markit](#), "fully supports" the decision to disband Trump's Strategic and Policy Forum that he sat on, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). Yergin, who advises many of the country's largest energy companies and helps organize the industry's largest annual conference, sat on the White House [forum](#) with the heads of GM, JPMorgan Chase and other major companies. Dow Chemical's Andrew Liveris also voiced support for the decision to disband the Manufacturing Council. "In discussions I had with the White House earlier today, I indicated that in the current environment it was no longer possible to conduct productive discussions under the auspices of the Initiative," he said in a statement. "And so, as proud as I am of the efforts we were taking on behalf of the American worker, disbanding the Manufacturing Jobs Initiative was the right decision." More from POLITICO's Dan Diamond on the corporate revolt [here](#).

Meanwhile, the American Technology Council, a government committee with advisers from the tech industry, will keep going, Pro Tech's Steven Overly and Nancy Scola [report](#), citing a White House official. The group was distinct from the other business groups that disbanded in that it was designed to convene government officials such as the secretary of Defense and head of OMB, rather than business executives. But it convened a summit in June that included heavy-hitters like Apple's Tim Cook, Amazon's Jeff Bezos and venture capitalist John Doerr, a major greentech backer.

MAIL CALL! PROTECT CLEAN ENERGY IN NAFTA TALKS: The Business Council for Sustainable Energy sent a [letter](#) to U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer urging the protection of clean energy technologies as the Trump administration begins to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement. "Giving attention to items such as a zero tariff for goods produced in North America, promoting U.S. codes and standards, and updating language to reflect the growing impact of information technology on all sectors, will ensure that NAFTA supports the continued growth of clean energy and the benefits it provides to the U.S. economy," Lisa Jacobson, the group's president, wrote. That comes as multiple environmental groups slammed the administration for kicking off negotiations in private.

BATHROOM BILLS OPPOSED BY ENERGY SECTOR KILLED: Texas lawmakers failed to pass several bills by the end of a special session that would have limited transgender individuals' access to bathrooms in public places and schools, BuzzFeed [reports](#). The bills, which divided state Republicans and the business community, were [opposed](#) by leaders of major energy companies, including BP America, Chevron, Dow Chemical Co., Exxon Mobil and Halliburton.

TRADE REMEDY CORNER: BIODIESEL INDUSTRY SAYS AD EXTENSION NOT A BIG DEAL: The Commerce Department this week [announced](#) a delay in its preliminary antidumping duty determination on imports of biodiesel from Argentina and Indonesia. The U.S. industry which is seeking relief says it's no big deal. The National Biodiesel Board, which is petitioning for the duties, requested an extension to the anti-dumping probe last month. The Commerce [investigation](#) is expected to issue preliminary countervailing duties by Aug. 22, which is also an extended deadline.

"It is evident from market reaction that some in the industry are not familiar with this legal

process and the fact that nearly every trade case, from steel to cased pencils, includes these routine extensions," said Doug Whitehead, chief operating officer of the National Biodiesel Board. "This in no way impacts the schedule or the fact that unfairly traded imports are hurting American companies and the employees who serve this industry. We remain confident that both the DOC and ITC will find in American biodiesel producers' favor."

SEND IN REINFORCEMENTS: NYU School of Law is launching the State Energy and Environmental Impact Center, backed by a \$6 million grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies, to help state attorneys general fight Trump administration efforts to roll back environmental regulations or climate change policies, the Washington Post [reports](#). David J. Hayes, deputy Interior secretary under President Obama, will be executive director for the nascent group.

PARK BOTTLE BAN AXED: Amid news it [removed](#) a Bikeshare station installed during the Obama administration from White House grounds, the Trump administration on Wednesday also [killed off](#) its predecessors effort to stop the sale of disposable water bottles on National Park Service grounds. "While we will continue to encourage the use of free water bottle filling stations as appropriate, ultimately it should be up to our visitors to decide how best to keep themselves and their families hydrated during a visit to a national park," Acting National Park Service Director Michael T. Reynolds said. The change in policy, which axes a 2011 Interior memorandum, takes effect immediately.

NEW ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE COALITION LAUNCHED: The Energy Equipment and Infrastructure Alliance launched a [new campaign](#) Wednesday to tout "the importance and benefits of energy infrastructure and its ongoing development." Entitled Energy Builders, the effort comes in response to expanding pipeline protest movement and aims to highlight local economic benefits and jobs that come from infrastructure projects. "The extremists pushing to 'keep it in the ground' don't appreciate what these projects mean to wage earners and their families, not to mention the power they provide for America's homes and businesses now and in the future," Terry O'Sullivan, general president of the Laborers' International Union of North America, said in a statement.

REPORT: YES WE CAN (LIMIT TEMPERATURE INCREASES): The Rocky Mountain Institute released a [report](#) Wednesday arguing limiting temperature increases to 2 degrees Celsius is both practical and possible. "Today, many experts doubt that energy systems can decarbonize fast enough to prevent this scenario," the report says. "But this belief is both dangerous and wrong." Among the shifts needed are rapid and economic scaling of clean energy technologies; foundational changes to emissions within agriculture, forestry and other land-use behaviors and coordinated market and policy incentives globally.

HOW TO TAKE AN AX TO EPA: Former Trump EPA transition leader Myron Ebell issued a [report](#) Wednesday offering suggestions for how to radically reduce the size of the agency. Among his recommendations: Eliminate the enforcement office; abolish the 10 regional offices and push their emergency response functions to FEMA; stop the environmental justice programs; and overhaul how the agency approaches its scientific work. Ebell also calls for greater disclosure from the agency on its discretionary spending on functions not formally designated by Congress.

BIG SALE! Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Total and two dozen other companies bid on 76 million Gulf of Mexico acres, drawing more than \$121 million in winning bids Wednesday from oil and gas companies, Pro's Ben Lefebvre [reports](#). The bidding comes up short of the \$247 million generated from a Gulf of Mexico lease sale last March.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TOOL UPDATED: EPA issued an annual update Wednesday to [EJSCREEN](#), its geographic tool for exploring environmental justice issues. According to EPA, the update includes new data on public schools and housing; a new way to view surface water pollution; and the ability to view cities as distinct areas, like with states. EPA will host three training webinars in the coming weeks. Click [here](#) for a blog post on the update from Matthew Tejada, director of EPA's Office of Environmental Justice. The Trump administration's proposed 2018 budget sought to zero out EPA spending on environmental justice, though Hill appropriators have not taken that route.

QUICK HITS

— 'You can't hoodwink the EPA': Drinking-water protection a problem for cash-strapped Pa. [Penn Live](#).

— Millions consumed potentially unsafe water in the past 10 years. [Texas Tribune](#).

— Western Officials Support Possible BLM, Federal Agency Relocation To Denver. [Western Wire](#).

— Missouri Utility Regulators Reject Proposed Massive Wind Power Line. [AP](#).

— Oil dips despite steep draw in U.S. crude stocks. [Reuters](#).

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EPA extends public comment period for WOTUS repeal [Back](#)

By Annie Snider | 08/16/2017 04:05 PM EDT

EPA is giving the public another month to comment on its move to repeal the Obama

administration's Waters of the U.S. rule.

The agency announced today that it will extend the public comment period by 30 days, giving environmental groups, industry advocates and the public until Sept. 27 to weigh on its proposed rule to repeal the Obama-era regulation.

Supporters of the Obama rule, which increases the number of streams and wetlands that receive automatic federal protection, had criticized the length of time the Trump administration gave for public comment. The repeal rule was originally opened for 30 days of comment, although it was public for about a month before the comment period formally opened. The original Obama rule, also called the Clean Water Rule, was open for more than 200 days. Issues raised through the public comment process help lay the groundwork for future legal challenges.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has pushed to swiftly repeal the contentious regulation and draft his own rewrite defining which marshes, bogs and creeks are subject to regulation under the Clean Water Act.

WHAT'S NEXT: Comments on the Trump administration's rule to repeal the WOTUS regulation are due by Sept. 27.

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GOP state senator Campbell jumps in against Heitkamp [Back](#)

By Kevin Robillard | 08/16/2017 11:49 AM EDT

Republican Tom Campbell, a North Dakota state senator and wealthy potato farmer, officially launched a campaign against Democratic Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) on Wednesday and is launching a major advertising buy to kick off his effort.

Campbell is the first entrant into the race against Heitkamp, who won her seat by just 3,000 votes over Republican Rick Berg in 2012. Heitkamp is considered one of the most vulnerable Democrats in the country in 2018, after President Donald Trump won the state by nearly 36 points in 2016.

"I'm going to be throwing my hat in the ring and running for United States Senate," Campbell said on a [local radio show](#). "The next generation is losing the American Dream. Politicians in Washington right now have lost touch with what made America great."

Heitkamp has raised money at a brisk pace this year, bringing in more than \$3 million for her campaign committee. Meanwhile, Campbell has given his campaign enough personal money to launch an early TV ad blitz, beginning with a 60-second biographical spot. The ad tells the story of Campbell starting a custom combine business when he was just 16 and later launching a

potato farming business, which employs hundreds of people in the state.

"Today, what Tom Campbell started with a combine and a prayer is a true North Dakota success story," the narrator says in the ad. "Hardworking. Conservative. Outsider. Exactly what North Dakota needs in Washington."

Watch the ad [here](#).

Republican Rep. [Kevin Cramer](#) is also weighing a run against Heitkamp.

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Yergin supports ending Trump policy advisory forum [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 08/16/2017 03:41 PM EDT

Daniel Yergin, an energy expert who sat on President Donald Trump's Strategic and Policy Forum, "fully supports" the forum's decision to disband, his spokesman told POLITICO.

"As our members have expressed individually over the past several days, intolerance, racism and violence have absolutely no place in this country and are an affront to core American values," forum members said in a prepared statement. "We believe the debate over forum participation has become a distraction from our well-intentioned and sincere desire to aid vital policy discussions on how to improve the lives of everyday Americans. As such, the president and we are disbanding the forum."

Yergin, vice chairman of consulting agency [IHS Markit](#), advises many of the country's largest energy companies and helps organize the industry's largest annual conference. He sat on the White House [forum](#) with the heads of General Motors, JPMorgan Chase and other major companies. An IHS spokesman said he supported the forum's decision to disband.

A steady stream of CEOs and other executives had left the forum and a separate White House manufacturing council in recent days to protest Trump's claim that both sides were responsible for violence at a white supremacist march in Charlottesville, Va., last weekend that left three people dead.

As the defections mounted today, Trump said he was [disbanding](#) both groups of business advisers.

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Trump dumps CEOs before more could abandon him [Back](#)

By Dan Diamond | 08/16/2017 12:50 PM EDT

Some of America's top CEOs were preparing to issue a statement criticizing the president — so he effectively fired them from a White House council first.

President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced he was ending two business advisory councils amid a stampede of defections and after one of the groups had decided to disband over the president's much-criticized response to the weekend's violence in Charlottesville, Va.

A person close to Trump's Strategic and Policy Forum said the group had already told the White House it had resolved to disband and condemn the president's Tuesday claims that "both sides" were responsible for violence at a white supremacist and neo-Nazi gathering and that some "very fine people" were among the marchers defending a Confederate statue.

The group in a statement presented the decision as mutual with Trump, though EY CEO Mark Weinberger tweeted Wednesday that "we made the right call." Members of the separate Manufacturing Council — which had already lost eight members this week — were due to hold their own call Wednesday.

"Rather than putting pressure on the businesspeople of the Manufacturing Council & Strategy & Policy Forum, I am ending both. Thank you all!" Trump [wrote on Twitter](#) Wednesday afternoon, ending the debate.

The split likely won't change Trump's agenda — the long-time real estate developer still intends to slash corporate taxes and regulations. And the White House said a separate group of government officials called the American Technology Council, which met with top Silicon Valley executives and Trump in June, will keep working. Still, the break-up of the two high-profile CEO groups shows increasing pressure on business leaders to distance themselves from the White House and could hurt Trump's standing with the pro-business, establishment wing of voters and donors in the Republican Party.

"There is no room for equivocation here: the evil on display by these perpetrators of hate should be condemned and has no place in a country that draws strength from our diversity and humanity," JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon said in a statement Wednesday after Trump disbanded the Strategic and Policy Forum to which he belonged. Dimon had weighed in on the events in Charlottesville over the weekend but had not criticized the president directly.

"It is a leader's role, in business or government, to bring people together, not tear them apart," he said.

Executives historically have clamored to belong to White House business councils, which give them an opportunity to pitch the president behind closed doors.

Merck's Kenneth Frazier — the first CEO to announce he was leaving Trump's manufacturing council this week — repeatedly pressed Trump in private on reforming tax laws. Dow Chemical CEO Andrew Liveris was initially granted a private sit-down with EPA head Scott Pruitt as the agency weighed a key regulation, though the meeting was trimmed down to a brief greeting.

In return, the executives served as surrogates for a White House trying to sell its pro-business message. Council members regularly flanked the president at a series of announcements and executive order signings. Executives like Campbell's Soup CEO Denise Morrison told reporters they were optimistic about Trump's effect on the economy. Dow donated about \$1 million for the president's inauguration.

The corporate backlash started Monday with Merck's Frazier — the only African-American CEO on Trump's manufacturing council — who said he was quitting "to take a stand against intolerance and extremism." Within a day, the CEOs of Under Armour and Intel said they were leaving too.

The president on Tuesday called them "grandstanders" on Twitter and lashed out at Merck specifically. He claimed the defections wouldn't hurt him.

"For every CEO that drops out of the Manufacturing Council, I have many to take their place," Trump tweeted on Tuesday morning. However, no other CEOs publicly stepped forward to join the council, and five more leaders said they were leaving.

On Tuesday — before Trump's news conference but after he took heat Saturday for blaming "many sides" for violence in Charlottesville — Morrison of Campbell's said she planned to remain on the manufacturing council. Social media campaigns in response called the company a "Soup Nazi" in reference to the television show Seinfeld; another circulated altered photos of fake Campbell's products called "Cream of Complicity" and "Swastika Soup."

On Wednesday, Morrison said she couldn't serve on the council any longer. "Racism and murder are unequivocally reprehensible and are not morally equivalent to anything else that happened in Charlottesville," Morrison said in a statement.

Others also flipped their stances. "The President's most recent statements equating those who are motivated by race-based hate with those who stand up against hatred is unacceptable and has changed our decision to participate in the White House Manufacturing Advisory Council," Johnson & Johnson CEO Alex Gorsky said on Wednesday — less than 24 hours after telling reporters he planned to stay on the council so J&J would have a voice in high-level discussions.

Activists said the overnight campaigns and threats of boycotts motivated executives. Progressive groups have also pushed payment processing companies to cut ties with hate groups, collecting thousands of signatures on petitions, though Discover, Visa and Mastercard told POLITICO they had limited ability to force banks to cut off merchants conducting legal businesses.

"The collapse of the CEO councils is not due to an outbreak of conscience," said Robert Weissman, president of Public Citizen. "Instead, it is public pressure — pressure for the CEOs to

evidence a measure of decency — that is driving them off the councils. That's not exactly the most inspiring example of moral leadership. No profiles in courage here."

Silicon Valley executives such as Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Apple's Tim Cook also met with Trump in June through the administration's American Technology Council, which is technically made up of government employees. Still, activists like Weissman are calling on the affiliated executives to condemn Trump's comments too.

Until this week, Trump had spent months praising the same executives who are now rebuking him.

"I want to thank these great business leaders," Trump said in February, when Merck's Frazier, J&J's Gorsky, Campbell's Morrison and other CEO advisers joined him for a signing ceremony on an executive order on regulatory reform. "They're helping us sort out what's going on, because ... it's been disastrous for business. This is going to be a place for business to do well and to thrive."

Lorraine Woellert, Nancy Scola and Steven Overly contributed to this report.

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Trump fallout with business leaders could chill relations with tech industry [Back](#)

By Steven Overly and Nancy Scola | 08/16/2017 06:45 PM EDT

The fallout between President Donald Trump and business executives this week is likely to chill his already icy relationship with tech industry leaders, even as the White House pushes ahead with plans to enlist their help in modernizing federal technology.

A White House official said Wednesday that the American Technology Council, a government committee with advisers from the tech industry, plans to carry on despite the dissolution of two separate councils composed of CEOs. And while some firms that advise the American Technology Council signaled they would continue to assist the administration, those that were already wary of this administration are likely to be more so after the week's tumult, which included the president tweeting his anger at one of the executives who quit.

"Tech CEOs will remain engaged with policymakers on the Hill and executive branch as they always have, working through industry groups such as the Business Roundtable and Technology CEO Council rather than specific presidential councils and commissions," said Bruce Mehlman, a Republican lobbyist and executive director of the Technology CEO Council, which includes Oracle, Xerox, Dell and Intel.

The CEOs, some of whom met with Trump at Trump Tower during the presidential transition or

appeared with him at the White House to tout corporate announcements, could also avoid Trump's presidential photo ops that make their engagement so public, instead working with the federal government through agencies and lobbying the administration through associations and advocacy groups.

Oracle said Wednesday it will continue to advise the administration on technology issues.

Intel CEO Brian Krzanich was among those to depart the president's Manufacturing Jobs Initiative, saying that the political climate was not conducive to getting work done. "I hope this will change, and I remain willing to serve when it does," he wrote in a [blog post](#). The company declined to say whether he would engage the administration in other capacities.

IBM CEO Ginni Rometty wrote in a memo to employees that CEOs on the president's Strategy and Policy Forum terminated the group because it "can no longer serve the purpose for which it was formed." She added, however, that IBM has a legacy of working with all administrations. "IBM will continue to work with all parts of the government for policies that support job growth, vocational education and global trade, as well as fair and informed policies on immigration and taxation," she wrote.

Other companies that have participated in American Technology Council activities — Alphabet, Microsoft, Apple, Qualcomm, Amazon and Adobe — either declined to comment or did not respond to questions.

Their silence isn't surprising. Most in the tech industry were already tempering talk about their engagement with the Trump administration. A parade of high-profile executives attended a White House summit in June, for example, but most declined to confirm their participation until the very last minute. Many have also insisted that their participation in such events is not an endorsement of Trump's policies — with some of those policies drawing the ire of Silicon Valley's liberal occupants.

It's reflective of the challenge that has persisted since their pick for president, Democrat Hillary Clinton, lost to Trump in November. The executives are pulled to assist the government and promote policies favorable to their businesses, but also want to keep distance from a president whose demeanor and political positions have galled many in the industry.

Trump's already precarious relationship with business leaders frayed quickly this week after he failed to place blame for a violent rally in Charlottesville, Va., squarely on white supremacists. Merck CEO Kenneth Frazier was the first to step down from Trump's manufacturing advisory council as a result, prompting a series of other business executives and labor leaders to follow suit.

Trump called them "grandstanders" and defiantly declared he could replace them easily. But on Wednesday, in a single tweet, Trump disbanded two CEO-level advisory committees that had been his most direct outreach to the nation's business leaders. "Rather than putting pressure on the businesspeople of the Manufacturing Council & Strategy & Policy Forum, I am ending both. Thank you all!" he wrote.

But the American Technology Council is different. Unlike those two groups, the ATC was created as a convening body of government officials — including the secretary of Defense, the director of OMB and the U.S. chief information officer — rather than of corporate leaders.

The council, though, has engaged with tech industry executives via a high-profile White House summit in June led by senior presidential adviser Jared Kushner that was attended by, among others, Apple's Tim Cook, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Microsoft's Satya Nadella and Eric Schmidt of Alphabet (Google's parent company), as well as a follow-up call with corporate officials earlier this month.

"The American Technology Council is solely made up of government employees," a White House official said. "The council is full steam ahead on its work assisting the modernizing of government IT, which is primarily being done through internal government resources. The council will continue to occasionally consult with the private sector on specific issue areas like improving cloud rollout, cybersecurity and digital services for vets."

The official also pointed out that, aside from the June meeting, the group's consultation with corporate leaders is remote, via emails and calls, and that there are no plans for further in-person events or meetings.

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BOEM Gulf of Mexico offshore lease sale yields \$121M [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 08/16/2017 05:23 PM EDT

BOEM's latest auction of offshore acreage in the Gulf of Mexico drew more than \$121 million in winning bids today from oil and gas companies.

Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Total and two dozen other companies bid on 76 million acres, which Interior said was the largest amount of Gulf acreage ever offered in a single lease auction. The bidding fell short of the \$247 million generated from a Gulf of Mexico lease sale last March, however.

President Donald Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke have touted offshore drilling as a way for the U.S. to achieve "energy dominance." But with oil prices hovering below \$50 a barrel, oil and gas companies have been wary of committing to new offshore projects, which can take several years and billions of dollars to carry out.

Interior slashed the royalty rate that companies have to pay on the oil and gas they produce to 12.5 percent for leases in less than 200 meters of water depth, down from the 18.5 percent originally advertised for the sale.

WHAT'S NEXT: Public comments are due Thursday on Interior's review for a new five-year offshore lease plan.

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