

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: POLITICO Pro Energy
Sent: Mon 6/5/2017 9:44:27 AM
Subject: Morning Energy: Pruitt still won't clarify Trump's climate views — More governors double down on climate action — Major week for energy nominations

By Anthony Adragna | 06/05/2017 05:42 AM EDT

PRUITT MAKES THE CIRCUIT: Climate change dominated the Sunday show circuit for the first time in years, but EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt again dodged nearly a dozen questions asking whether President Donald Trump still rejects the science showing that human activity is driving the problem and continues to consider it a "hoax." He instead stuck to familiar talking points that the administration's decision to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement was because it was a "bad deal" for the U.S. that will harm economic growth. "Frankly, George, I think the whole question is an effort to get it off the point and the issue of whether Paris is good for this country or not," Pruitt said on ABC's "This Week." "And the president has indicated the climate changes."

But he didn't get a free ride: "Fox News Sunday's" Chris Wallace peppered Pruitt with aggressive questioning about the decision, asking incredulously how the underlying science of climate change never came up during months of discussions about Paris. After displaying statistics showing there are more than twice as many solar energy employees as those in coal, Wallace asked if the administration's efforts to try to bring back coal are akin to "protecting the horse and buggy business just as cars come online?" Pruitt shot back: "Absolutely not."

ICYMI: Pro's Alex Guillén examines Pruitt's move into the spotlight and inner orbit of Trump world as he helped convince the president to withdraw from the climate deal.

Another Trump administration official, U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, asserted to CNN's "State of the Union" that Trump's views are part of the mainstream consensus. "President Trump believes the climate is changing and he believes pollutants are part of the equation," she said. Haley also downplayed concerns leaving the Paris deal would hurt U.S. diplomatic efforts globally. "I don't think we're the skunk at the party," she said. "Just because we got out of a club doesn't mean that we don't care about the environment."

ME's caution: If you want to know how Trump views climate science, best to hear it directly from his mouth.

GORE SLAMS 'RECKLESS' WITHDRAWAL: Pruitt wasn't the only one talking climate on the Sunday shows: former Vice President Al Gore appeared to bash Trump's decision while also expressing hope the U.S. would still hit the Obama administration emissions reduction pledges thanks to the efforts of states, mayors and businesses. "I think it was indefensible and undermines America's standing in the world and threatens the ability of humanity to solve the climate crisis in time," Gore said on CNN.

Zing! Former Secretary of State John Kerry on NBC's "Meet the Press": "When Donald Trump says to the world, 'Well, we're going to negotiate a better deal,' I mean, you know, he's

going to go out and find a better deal? I mean, that's like O.J. Simpson saying he's going to go out and find the real killer. Everybody knows he isn't going to do that."

WELCOME TO MONDAY! I'm your host Anthony Adragna, and the Southern Environmental Law Center's Navis Bermudez correctly picked New Hampshire as the only state in the country without a mandatory seatbelt law. Next up: What's the only state where you can't buy beer, wine and liquor from almost all stores on Sunday? 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).

OTHERS DOUBLE DOWN — GOP governors join climate alliance: Two Republican Northeastern governors — Massachusetts' [Charlie Baker](#) and Vermont's [Phil Scott](#) — announced Friday they would join the expanding coalition of U.S. states seeking to uphold the goals of the Paris deal. Along with founding states California, Washington and New York, other participants in the U.S. Climate Alliance now include [Connecticut](#), [Hawaii](#), [Oregon](#) and [Rhode Island](#).

No retreat by Modi: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi showed no signs of stepping back from his country's efforts to address climate change — pointedly calling it the biggest threat facing humanity, along with terrorism — during his first bilateral meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron, POLITICO Europe's Silvia Sciorilli Borrelli [reports](#). "I believe the Paris agreement is a collective asset of the world, this is will also be an asset to the coming generations," Modi said, according to a [report](#) by New Delhi TV. "It is our responsibility to protect mother earth." India, the world's third largest emitter, vowed to stick with the accord despite Trump's withdrawal.

Australia's Foreign Minister Julie Bishop reiterated her country's commitment to the Paris Agreement during a Sunday speech. "The EU and Australia will need to take a leadership role" on the climate agreement, Bishop [said](#), according to POLITICO Europe's Zoya Sheftalovich.

PARIS RALLY DRIPS WITH IRONY: About 50 supporters gathered in Lafayette Square (named for the French general who supported the colonies in the American Revolution) for a "Pittsburgh Not Paris" rally to thank Trump for withdrawing from the accord signed in the French capital. As The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette [reports](#), that D.C. rally was dwarfed by one in downtown Steel City that drew 2,000 people in support of the accord after Mayor Bill Peduto [announced](#) Friday the city would move toward being powered entirely by clean energy by 2035. Back in D.C., Trump missed his supporters rallying behind his decision as he'd left for his golf course in Virginia before they convened.

HUGE WEEK FOR ENERGY NOMINEES: Lawmakers on the the Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee will [vote on](#) the nominations of Neil Chatterjee and Robert Powelson to be FERC commissioners, David Bernhardt to be deputy secretary at Interior, and Dan Brouillette to be No. 2 at DOE Tuesday morning at 9:30 a.m. Ahead of the votes, the nominees released more than 200 pages of responses to questions from senators (available [here](#)). Bernhardt committed to recuse himself from matters involving former lobbying clients for two years but stopped short of committing to additional transparency measures Democrats requested, Pro's Annie Snider and Esther Whieldon [report](#).

The following day, Environment and Public Works Committee members kick off the process for three Nuclear Regulatory Commission nominees, as well as Susan Bodine's selection to run EPA's enforcement office at 10 a.m.

PERRY AT FUKUSHIMA: Six years after the nuclear emergency, Energy Secretary Rick Perry toured the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power plant in Japan on Sunday. "A truly eye-opening experience," he tweeted with a pic. "The U.S. is committed to our partnership with Japan on this cleanup and our shared vision for a clean environment and brighter future," he added.

WORTH REUPPING: Federal agencies have been instructed by the White House not to cooperate with oversight requests from congressional Democrats, POLITICO's Burgess Everett and Josh Dawsey report. Republicans say the move is designed to stop congressional minorities from getting access to information that might be harmful to the president. "I don't think you'd have the Democrats responding to every minority member request if they were in the same position," one White House official said.

In response, top Senate EPW Democrat Tom Carper said: "This administration believes that it is somehow exempt from the basic requirements of transparency that come with representative government ... I will continue to press for this administration to show their work and report fully and accurately on what actions they are taking on our behalf."

GETTING CHILLY IN HERE: Trump's relationship with corporate America has soured as dozens of executives publicly rebuked the White House over the decision to quit Paris, POLITICO's Ben White and Annie Karni report. They're also dismayed that the administration's big Capitol Hill agenda, which includes passing massive tax cuts, appears stalled and they are terrified by the very public White House fight over how and when to raise the debt limit. The administration brushed off those reports. "We knew there would be blowback from Paris but so far it hasn't been that bad," said one senior official who declined to be identified by name.

SECRETARIES STRESS WILDFIRE COOPERATION: Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue signed a memorandum Friday in Idaho emphasizing the importance of interagency cooperation ahead of what they said is anticipated to be a "challenging" wildfire season. Zinke also spent time with the smokejumpers, who parachute into remote areas to fight fires, and he participated in meetings on forest management at the state Capitol with Perdue, Gov. Butch Otter and Sen. Jim Risch.

REGS UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: Trump's OMB has dramatically ramped up the number of EPA regulations its reviewing and has begun taking lots more meetings to gather input from interested parties, Pro's Alex Guillén reports in Energy Regulation Watch. Early proposals now under review include the 2018 Renewable Fuel Standard proposal, as well as a proposed repeal of the Obama-era Waters of the U.S. rule.

Meet your (rule) maker: OMB has meetings scheduled this week the American Chemistry Council, the Environmental Working Group, and the Environmental Defense Fund on EPA's rule

that will detail how the agency prioritizes chemical risk evaluations, part of the revised Toxic Substances Control Act. That follows four meetings Friday on the 2018 RFS rule.

MOVER, SHAKER: John Giordano, who served as deputy general counsel on Donald Trump's transition team as well as on the Energy Department landing team, has joined Archer & Greiner as a partner in the Philadelphia office. He is not planning to register to lobby, according to a spokeswoman for the firm (h/t POLITICO Influence).

CONGRATS: Albert McGartland, director of EPA's National Center for Environmental Economics, is the first-ever federal government economist to be named a fellow of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists. The honor recognizes contributions to advancing environmental and resource economics.

QUICK HITS

- Energy's Perry having blast running agency he vowed to kill. [AP](#).
- Merkel's Chief of Staff Says EU to Join China, India on Climate. [Bloomberg](#).
- South Korea plans energy U-turn away from coal, nuclear. [Reuters](#).
- Woman seeks release before pipeline protest shooting trial. [AP](#).
- Trouble brews for OPEC as expensive deep-sea oil turns cheap. [Bloomberg](#).
- How G.O.P. Leaders Came to View Climate Change as Fake Science. [New York Times](#).
- Once-secret records reveal pattern of costly mistakes at troubled nuclear project. [The State](#).

HAPPENING THIS WEEK

MONDAY

2:00 p.m. — [Briefing](#) on the national security implications of climate change, The Environmental and Energy Study Institute, the Henry M. Jackson Foundation and the Center for Climate and Security, 334 Cannon

2:00 p.m. — "[The Future of Mobility: A Fireside Chat with Bill Ford](#)," The Atlantic Council, 1030 15th Street NW, 12th Floor

TUESDAY

9:30 a.m. — [Hearing](#) to examine various nominations, Senate Energy and Natural Resources, 366 Dirksen

12:00 p.m. — "[Achieving a High-Performance Built Environment: Findings and](#)

Recommendations from the Consultative Council," High Performing Building Coalition, 122 Cannon

WEDNESDAY

8:45 a.m. — "Energy Security in Central & Eastern Europe: New Challenges and Opportunities," Atlantic Council, 1030 15th Street NW

9:30 a.m. — "Review of the FY2018 Budget Request for the U.S. Forest Service," Senate Appropriations Interior, EPA and Related Agencies Subcommittee, Dirksen 124

10:00 a.m. — Hearing to examine three NRC and one EPA nomination, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, 406 Dirksen

10:00 a.m. — "Energy Opportunities in North America," House Foreign Affairs Committee's Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, 2172 Rayburn

10:00 a.m. — "Oversight on the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's Abandoned Mine Lands Program," House Natural Resources Committee's Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee, 1324 Longworth

10:30 a.m. — "National Science Foundation Budget Hearing," House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, 2359 Rayburn

2:00 p.m. — House Natural Resources Committee, Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs Subcommittee hearing on various legislation, 1324 Longworth

2:30 p.m. — "Moving into a Second Century of Service: Working to Improve the National Park Service Workplace Environment," Senate Energy Committee's National Parks Subcommittee, 366 Dirksen

2:30 p.m. — "Review of the FY2018 Budget Request for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission," Senate Appropriations Energy and Water Development Subcommittee, Dirksen 138

THURSDAY

9:30 a.m. — House Appropriations Committee's Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee holds a hearing on the Interior Department budget, 2007 Rayburn

10:00 a.m. — "Hearing to study cost reductions in emerging energy technologies with a specific focus on how recent trends may affect today's energy landscape," Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, 366 Dirksen

2:00 p.m. — "Oversight Hearing on Burdensome Litigation and Federal Bureaucratic Roadblocks to Manage our Nation's Overgrown, Fire-Prone National Forests," House Natural Resources Federal Lands Subcommittee, 1324 Longworth

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

To view online:

<https://www.politicopro.com/tipsheets/morning-energy/2017/06/pruitt-still-wont-clarify-trumps-climate-views-023134>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

Pruitt dodges another question on Trump climate change beliefs [Back](#)

By Madeline Conway | 06/04/2017 11:26 AM EDT

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt again dodged on Sunday when asked whether President Donald Trump believes that climate change is man-made and accused people asking about his position on the issue of trying to create a distraction from the debate around the Paris climate agreement.

Although Pruitt said in an interview with George Stephanopoulos on ABC's "This Week" that Trump has indicated that "the climate changes," he repeatedly avoided answering whether the president believes the scientific consensus that global temperatures are warming due to human activity, namely carbon emissions.

"Frankly, George, I think the whole question is an effort to get it off the point and the issue of whether Paris is good for this country or not," Pruitt said. "And the president has indicated the climate changes."

Trump announced on Thursday that the U.S. intends to exit the Paris accord, a pact reached by more than 190 countries to set targets to reduce carbon emissions to combat climate change.

Trump has previously called climate change a "hoax" manufactured by the Chinese, and after Thursday's announcement, his aides avoided questions about whether he still believes that conspiracy theory.

In an interview with CBS' "Face the Nation" this weekend, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley seemed to suggest that Trump does not buy into that theory.

She said Trump believes that the "climate is changing" and that he believes "pollutants" are part of it, though she did not specify whether he believes global warming is primarily caused by human activity.

"The president believes the climate is changing," Haley said. "And he does know that pollutants are a part of that equation."

The former South Carolina governor added: "We've got a president who is going to watch out for the environment. It's what we do, it's who we are."

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

EPA's Pruitt basks in Trump glow after Paris pullout [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 06/02/2017 07:15 PM EDT

Scott Pruitt's victory in vanquishing the Paris climate agreement has given him a status few of his predecessors enjoyed — an EPA chief who is clearly his administration's public face in driving environmental policy.

Pruitt's move into the spotlight comes after weeks of White House infighting over whether to reject the global climate pact, and shows that the former Oklahoma attorney general's got the president's ear on energy and environmental issues despite being a newcomer to Trump's orbit.

Typically, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency toils away crafting air and water regulations, and defending the administration's policies in Congress, while more prominent officials lead the charge on the grand policy vision. Those more high-profile roles went to people like John Kerry, who served as a kind of global climate ambassador when he was Barack Obama's secretary of state, or former Vice Presidents Dick Cheney and Al Gore.

But when President Donald Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris agreement Thursday, Pruitt was the one joining him at the podium in the Rose Garden — while Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who'd wanted to stick with the deal, was nowhere to be seen. Pruitt repeated his victory lap at Friday's White House news briefing, beaming as he jostled with reporters over whether he and Trump accept the reality of climate change.

Pruitt's prominence is a byproduct of how Trump views the Paris deal, former Obama climate negotiator Jonathan Pershing said Friday — through the lens of the U.S. economy, not as a worldwide fight against a common threat.

"It was a domestic agenda and not an international agenda that was dictating the policy" this week, Pershing said. "That's consistent with the way [Trump] characterized it as protecting American jobs. It was not characterized in the terms of American security being at risk because of climate change."

At Friday's news briefing, Pruitt praised Trump once again for the Paris decision, saying he had the courage to withdraw from a pact that would have benefited other countries as the expense of the U.S. economy.

"We owe no apologies to other nations for our environmental stewardship," said Pruitt, who had celebrated his win Thursday night with a dinner with staffers at the French-themed D.C. bistro Le Diplomate.

Tillerson, meanwhile, declined to endorse Trump's move at a separate news appearance Friday, calling it "a policy decision."

Despite months of behind-the-scenes debate over Paris that pitted Pruitt and Trump adviser Steve Bannon against Tillerson, Ivanka Trump and top economic adviser Gary Cohn, Pruitt sought to downplay his own influence over the president, saying he won on the merits.

In an appearance on Fox News on Thursday evening, Pruitt dismissed the idea there had been an epic struggle as "simply legend."

"What happened in this process is what happens with every decision the president makes," Pruitt said. "He had advisers around him informing, equipping, helping him make a decision. The debate was good and strong and meaningful amongst all voices and the president made an informed decision."

But Pruitt has emerged as a power player inside the administration who appears to have the confidence of the president.

"It's all eyes on Pruitt because there's a lot of big issues regarding how the Trump administration addresses climate change," said Nick Loris, an economist at the conservative Heritage Foundation.

Pruitt's prominence is at least partly due to the fact that climate change isn't a top issue in the administration.

"There's just fewer cooks in the kitchen because addressing climate change is clearly not a priority for Trump," Loris said. And given how he fought against the Obama climate agenda while serving as Oklahoma's attorney general, "I'm not surprised he's spreading his wings to the international stage," he added.

Pruitt has already proved himself a successful operator in carrying out Trump's deregulation agenda.

He has had significant early success in pausing several key Obama-era regulations that were still in court, including a sweeping carbon regulation for power plants, ozone pollution limits, and the Waters of the U.S. rule that defines which wetlands, streams and rivers fall under federal rules. The repeal process for those rules could take years, but Pruitt is well positioned to succeed in the task.

And in the meantime, Pruitt has canceled an EPA information request that would have set the stage for methane pollution limits for oil and gas wells, re-opened emissions standards for future vehicles and taken steps to modify other Obama-era regulations.

With his Paris win, Pruitt is positioning himself as the administration's leading voice on the international issues surrounding climate change.

On Fox News, Pruitt downplayed the potential diplomatic harm of the Paris decision, noting that the U.S. pulled out of the Kyoto Protocol in 2001 but weathered criticisms over that as well.

"If you go back and read, in March and April of 2001, the criticisms that was being led against President Bush, you can read the comments from the German chancellor, they're almost identical to the ones today."

However, Bush administration officials at the time found themselves surprised by other nations' strong reactions.

Then-Secretary of State Colin Powell [said in 2002](#) that the "blowback" from Europe "was a sobering experience that everything the American president does has international repercussions." And Condoleezza Rice, at the time George W. Bush's national security adviser, [wrote](#) in a 2011 memoir that the Kyoto withdrawal was "a self-inflicted wound that could have been avoided."

Pruitt may soon find out just how angry his international counterparts are.

He will head to Italy on June 11 and 12 for an environmental ministerial meeting connected to the G-7 summit Trump recently attended. Italy, along with Germany and France, said in a [statement](#) Thursday that there is no renegotiating the Paris agreement, despite what Trump promised Thursday.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

FERC, DOE, Interior nominees respond to Senate committee questions [Back](#)

By Darius Dixon and Annie Snider | 06/02/2017 03:18 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's nominees for FERC and the departments of Energy and Interior have provided the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee with more than 200 pages in response to lawmaker questions, according to records obtained by POLITICO.

Responses submitted by Neil Chatterjee, a nominee for FERC commissioner, can be found [here](#).

Responses submitted by Robert Powelson, another nominee for FERC commissioner, can be found [here](#).

Responses submitted by Dan Brouillette, Trump's pick for deputy Energy secretary, can be found [here](#).

Responses submitted by David Bernhardt, who has been tapped for DOI's No. 2 job, can be

found [here](#).

WHAT'S NEXT: The energy committee is [scheduled](#) to vote on all four nominations Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. in Dirksen 366.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Interior nominee sidesteps Democrats' ethics demands [Back](#)

By Annie Snider and Esther Whieldon | 06/02/2017 05:32 PM EDT

President Donald Trump's nominee for the No. 2 spot at the Interior Department is asking Congress to trust that he will avoid conflicts of interest related to his former lobbying clients, but he stopped short of committing to additional transparency measures Democrats requested.

David Bernhardt, a former lobbyist who has represented oil and gas, agricultural and water supply interests, said he would "fully comply with the ethics agreement" he signed when Trump nominated him as deputy Interior secretary, according to written [responses](#) to lawmakers obtained by POLITICO.

Bernhardt said he would recuse himself from matters involving former clients for two years. But he would not say who those clients are or what business they may have before Interior, nor would he agree to regularly notify the committee of where he had recused himself.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee is slated to vote on Bernhardt's nomination Tuesday.

Bernhardt said in his written responses that he does not "anticipate" requesting an ethics waiver, but if he does, will discuss with Interior's designated ethics official "whether such a request should be made public."

Sen. [Al Franken](#) (D-Minn.) asked Bernhardt if he would agree to provide the committee with quarterly reports listing issues he had stepped aside from because they involved past clients. Bernhardt declined.

"I will not provide a list, but I will commit to visiting with you as often as you would like," Bernhardt wrote.

Bernhardt was a member of Trump's transition team last fall, when he also worked for the law and lobbying firm Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, whose clients include the Cadiz water project. The Trump administration delivered a big boost for that project in April when it [reopened](#) a legal loophole that could allow it to be built across federal land without going through an environmental review. But Bernhardt said in his written responses that he was not

involved in that or other decisions related to past clients when he was part of the transition, reiterating what he told senators during his confirmation hearing.

The nominee also said he did not believe that the nondisclosure agreement he signed before joining the transition would prevent him from sharing information with Congress — something he had questioned during his confirmation hearing.

But Bernhardt disputed Sen. [Maria Cantwell](#)'s assertion that he should recuse himself from issues relating to drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Bernhardt represented Alaska in a case against Interior relating to drilling in the refuge.

"I reject the premise of your question, which appears to be that litigation on a particular legal question regarding whether the lawfulness of Department of the Interior actions creates a presumption of permanent partiality on different matters," Bernhardt wrote in his response.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke this week ordered the department to assess how much oil and gas could be drilled in a section of the refuge.

On climate change, Sens. [Bernie Sanders](#) (I-Vt.) and Franken each pressed Bernhardt on his stance.

At his confirmation hearing Bernhardt said Interior is going to [follow the lead](#) of Trump, who has never acknowledged that human activity is a factor. In his written responses, Bernhardt answered "yes" when asked by Sanders if he agrees that "combustion of fossil fuels contributes to climate change."

Ben Lefebvre contributed this report.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

White House orders agencies to ignore Democrats' oversight requests [Back](#)

By Burgess Everett and Josh Dawsey | 06/02/2017 05:11 AM EDT

The White House is telling federal agencies to blow off Democratic lawmakers' oversight requests, as Republicans fear the information could be weaponized against President Donald Trump.

At meetings with top officials for various government departments this spring, Uttam Dhillon, a White House lawyer, told agencies not to cooperate with such requests from Democrats, according to Republican sources inside and outside the administration.

It appears to be a formalization of a practice that had already taken hold, as Democrats have

complained that their oversight letters requesting information from agencies have gone unanswered since January, and the Trump administration has not yet explained the rationale.

The declaration amounts to a new level of partisanship in Washington, where the president and his administration already feels besieged by media reports and attacks from Democrats. The idea, Republicans said, is to choke off the Democratic congressional minorities from gaining new information that could be used to attack the president.

"You have Republicans leading the House, the Senate and the White House," a White House official said. "I don't think you'd have the Democrats responding to every minority member request if they were in the same position."

A White House spokeswoman said the policy of the administration is "to accommodate the requests of chairmen, regardless of their political party." There are no Democratic chairmen, as Congress is controlled by Republicans.

The administration also responds to "all non-oversight inquiries, including the Senate's inquiries for purposes of providing advice and consent on nominees, without regard to the political party of the requester," the spokeswoman said. "Multiple agencies have, in fact, responded to minority member requests. No agencies have been directed not to respond to minority requests."

Republicans said that President Barack Obama's administration was not always quick to respond to them and sometimes ignored them. However, the Obama White House never ordered agencies to stop cooperating with Republican oversight requests altogether, making the marching orders from Trump's aides that much more unusual.

"What I do not remember is a blanket request from the Obama administration not to respond to Republicans," said a former longtime senior Republican staffer.

There are some exceptions to the Trump administration order, particularly from national security agencies, Democrats and Republicans said. Agencies will also comply if a Republican committee chairman joins the Democratic requests, but ranking members' oversight requests are spurned.

Congressional minorities frequently ask questions of the administration intended to embarrass the president or garner a quick headline. And Democrats have fired off requests they surely knew the administration would not answer, such as asking the White House in March to make visitor logs of Trump Tower and Mar-A-Lago publicly available.

But House and Senate lawmakers also routinely fire off much more obscure requests not intended to generate news coverage. And the Trump administration's plans to stonewall Democrats is in many ways unprecedented and could lead to a worsening of the gridlock in Washington.

Austin Evers, a former Obama administration lawyer in the State Department who runs a watchdog group called American Oversight, said the Trump administration has instituted a "dramatic change" in policy from Reagan-era congressional standards in which the government

provided more information to committee chairman but also consistently engaged in oversight with rank-and-file minority members.

"Instructing agencies not to communicate with members of the minority party will poison the well. It will damage relationships between career staffers at agencies and subject matter experts in Congress," Evers said. "One of the reasons you respond to letters from the minority party is to explain yourself. It is to put on the record that even accusations that you find unreasonable are not accurate."

One month ago, Rep. Kathleen Rice (D-N.Y.) and other Democrats sent a letter to the Office of Personnel Management asking for cybersecurity information after it was revealed that millions of people had their identities compromised. The [letter](#) asked questions about how cybersecurity officials were hired, and in Rice's view, it "was not a political letter at all."

"The answer we got back is, 'We only speak to the chair people of committees.' We said, 'That's absurd, what are you talking about?'" Rice said in an interview. "I was dumbfounded at their response. I had never gotten anything like that ... The administration has installed loyalists at every agency to keep tabs on what information people can get."

At a House Appropriations hearing in May, Rep. Matt Cartwright (D-Pa.) asked acting General Services Administrator Tim Horne about a briefing House Oversight Committee staffers had received from the GSA, in which they were informed that the "GSA has a new policy only to respond to Republican committee chairmen."

"The administration has instituted a new policy that matters of oversight need to be requested by the committee chair," Horne responded.

In February, Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) asked for information on changes to [healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) from the Health and Human Services Department. They're still waiting for an answer. In early May, Murray and six other senators asked the president about why Vivek Murthy was dismissed as surgeon general. There was no response, and her staff said those are just a couple of the requests that have gone unanswered.

"It's no surprise that they would try to prevent Congress from getting the information we need to make sure government is working for the people we represent," Murray said when asked about the lack of cooperation.

The Senate's Homeland Security and Government Accountability Committee, the primary investigator in that chamber, has received some responses from the Trump administration but has seen several letters only signed by Democrats ignored. Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) wrote Education Secretary Betsy DeVos asking for help addressing the challenges of rural schools and joined with Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) to question the security of Trump's use of a personal cell phone as president. Neither was answered, an aide said.

A senior Democratic aide said that of the Senate Democrats' 225 oversight letters sent to the Trump administration since January asking for information, the vast majority have received no

response.

"When it comes to almost anything we've done at a federal agency, very close to 100 percent of those we haven't heard anything back. And at the White House it's definitely 100 percent," said a second senior Democratic aide. "This is rampant all over committee land."

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

America's CEOs fall out of love with Trump [Back](#)

By Ben White and Annie Karni | 06/03/2017 07:19 AM EDT

NEW YORK — The relationship between corporate America and Donald Trump's White House has chilled.

The regular parades of business titans into the West Wing are gone. A gathering of executives led by Blackstone CEO Stephen Schwarzman initially planned for next week fell apart amid scheduling conflicts.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk and Disney CEO Bob Iger quit as outside advisers to President Donald Trump following his rejection of the Paris climate accords. Dozens of other executives also publicly rebuked the White House over the decision, including Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein — a former colleague of many top administration officials — who used his first-ever tweet to criticize the Paris decision, calling it a "setback for the environment and for the U.S.'s leadership position in the world."

Chief executives and senior corporate lobbyists are also dismayed that the administration's big Capitol Hill agenda — including repealing Obamacare and passing massive tax cuts — appears stalled. And the White House is now engaged in a very public fight with itself over how and when to raise the debt limit, a terrifying prospect for Wall Street and the rest of corporate America.

Executives also remain puzzled by regular reports of imminent shakeups in the West Wing, including the possible replacement of chief of staff Reince Priebus.

The result is at least a temporary freeze as CEOs grow skittish about public association with a leader who likes to describe himself as the most business-friendly president ever to sit in the Oval Office. This is especially true for executives at big public companies, who have to take into account how employees and shareholders will respond to interactions with an unpopular and controversial president.

"It's obviously harder for public-facing companies because when the president takes a controversial position on an issue, there's pushback from clients, customers and possibly

shareholders," said Kathryn Wylde, president of the Partnership for New York City, a group that includes many top CEOs.

Wylde noted that it's easier for executives who come out of Trump's world of privately held companies to stay close to the president. "The potential mobilization of employees and customers through social media has made business people wary of getting involved in highly contentious political issues," she said. "For those in private business who are not directly customer facing, it's not so much an issue."

White House officials strongly deny there has been a cooling off. They say the initial flurry of meetings was part of a push intended to set up lines of communication within the first 100 days. More gatherings will occur soon, they say.

"We knew there would be blowback from Paris, but so far it hasn't been that bad," said one senior official who declined to be identified by name. "There will be plenty more of these meetings."

In response to a request for comment on the wave of public critiques from CEOs, a White House spokesman repeated Trump's argument that the Paris accord would slow the U.S. economy. "The President is keeping his promise by working for a new or better deal for America," the spokesman said in a statement.

Defenders of the administration note that CEOs quitting Trump's outside advisory panels thus far are Democrats from blue states like California.

The White House is planning a daylong summit of technology CEOs at the White House for June 19 to discuss modernizing government systems, an effort led by Trump's son-in-law and top adviser Jared Kushner. But Musk has already quit as an outside adviser, and Apple CEO Tim Cook and other tech titans also criticized the Paris decision.

The tech meeting is now seen as a key barometer for whether more CEOs will put distance between themselves and the White House.

One consultant who works to connect CEOs and the White House said there is more concern now among business leaders about attending White House meetings. "It's like a Ponzi scheme — pretending you have people confirmed to get other people to confirm," this person said. "It's a manifestation of the fact that the air is coming out of this balloon quickly because the policy proposals haven't been coordinated with the Hill, the expectation that anything will be done is rapidly dissipating."

From a purely political perspective, the distancing of corporate CEOs may not be especially bad for Trump. He won as a populist railing against corporate influence, specifically singling out Goldman Sachs.

Many of his advisers, including chief strategist Steve Bannon, embrace an image of the president siding with coal miners and against big global companies like Goldman and GE — whose CEO,

Jeff Immelt, also issued a direct critique of Trump's Paris withdrawal on Twitter, though he plans to remain on Trump's manufacturing council and has spoken favorably of the administration's plans on taxes and regulation.

But there are several potential downsides. Alienating corporate executives and lobbyists could reduce Trump's ability to raise money for an eventual reelection campaign and for other Republicans in the upcoming midterms. It could also make pushing through tough legislative items like corporate tax reform harder.

Changing corporate tax law always creates winners and losers, and the White House will need to ensure that any industries that might take an initial hit from any final bill don't organize to stop what could turn out to be the administration's biggest first-term initiative.

"There was that early blitz of meetings with leaders from all different industries, and now that's slowed down a bit," said a senior Washington lobbyist who often visits the West Wing but declined to be identified by name speaking about the White House. "Some of that is natural. But they'll have to do more of them if they want to succeed on health care and taxes, and they have to do both or they are at significant risk in the midterms."

Trump regularly touts himself as a strongly pro-business president focused on creating jobs and speeding up economic growth. But both of those depend in part on corporate confidence in the administration's ability to deliver on taxes and regulation changes.

And if that confidence wanes, the already slowing pace of job creation could decline even more. "If an administration wants something to happen and corporate America doesn't believe in it, it's pretty much dead in the water," said Charles Geisst, a business historian at Manhattan College.

While relations might be at a low moment, executives and their lobbyists are not likely to stay away from the White House for long.

One corporate executive noted that Trump is often swayed by the last person he talks to, so, the executive said, remaining in the president's good graces and keeping up access is critical. The senior lobbyist noted that next week is supposed to be focused on changing financial regulations with the House expected to pass a bill rolling back much of the Dodd-Frank law and Treasury slated to release a report on changing financial laws.

The summer will bring a focus on raising the debt limit, keeping the government open and moving forward on tax reform, all issue critical to corporate America. National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn this week promised to deliver a detailed tax plan to Congress after the August recess.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Let kids' climate suit go to trial, judge recommends [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 05/01/2017 04:21 PM EDT

A federal magistrate judge today said that a group of children seeking to force the federal government to take drastic action on climate change should be allowed to make their case in court.

The Trump administration, backed up by the oil and manufacturing industries, in March asked a judge in the U.S. District Court in Oregon to let them leapfrog her and ask the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals to toss out the case before it goes to trial.

In a 16-page [recommendation](#) today, Thomas Coffin, a magistrate judge assisting with the case, recommended that District Court Judge Ann Aiken reject the administration's request. Aiken [concluded](#) last year that there were enough questions to merit a trial.

Many of the legal questions are inextricably tied to scientific questions about climate change's causes and risks, as well as the government's past and current efforts to curb greenhouse gases or encourage fossil fuel development, Coffin wrote. A trial would allow the Trump administration and industry groups to present any evidence against climate change and its risks in a public forum, he added.

The children behind the lawsuit argue that the government has violated a public trust doctrine by knowing of climate change for decades but not doing enough to combat the threat. The Obama and Trump administrations have rejected that argument.

The Trump administration could still ask the 9th Circuit to get involved, but officials would have a much harder time if Aiken agrees with Coffin.

WHAT'S NEXT: Judge Aiken must decide whether to agree with Coffin's assessment or give her blessing to the Trump administration's early appeal effort.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Was this Pro content helpful? Tell us what you think in one click.				
Yes, very	Somewhat	Neutral	Not really	Not at all

You received this POLITICO Pro content because your customized settings include: Morning Energy. To change your alert settings, please go to <https://www.politicopro.com/settings>

This email was sent to jackson.ryan@epa.gov by: POLITICO, LLC 1000 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA, 22209, USA
