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From: POLITICO Pro Energy Whiteboard
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Subject: Groups seek ethics probe of former Interior employee who joined oil trade association

By Esther Whieldon

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Three left-leaning nonprofit groups are asking the Interior Department's top ethics official to determine whether a former senior official who left for a job with the oil industry violated conflict-of-interest laws by participating in meetings about oil and gas policy in the weeks before her departure.

Megan Bloomgren, who joined Interior's beachhead team in December and left the department in June to go work for the American Petroleum Institute, may have been involved in discussions affecting oil and gas policy while she was negotiating her job with the industry's top trade association, according to a Tuesday [letter](#) from Public Citizen, Friends of the Earth and the Climate Investigations Center to Melinda Loftin, Interior's designated ethics official.

Public Citizen and the green groups cite Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's calendar entries that listed Bloomgren's name, including for an April meeting with oil executives, and note that ethics officials reported having no records of Bloomgren recusing herself or obtaining waivers to participate in the meetings. But they acknowledge "key facts remain unknown," including whether Bloomgren actually attended the meetings.

Bloomgren said she followed the rules.

"I joined the administration for the initial transition period to help in any small way I could to ensure smooth transition," she said in a statement to POLITICO. "And I strongly support an open and responsive government and I was briefed on and abided by all ethical rules that applied to me during that time."

A spokeswoman for Interior said Bloomgren "requested a recusal in early May and followed all appropriate rules."

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