

**United States House of Representatives  
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis**

**Hearing on November 18, 2021  
“Tribal Voices, Tribal Wisdom: Strategies for the Climate Crisis”**

**Questions for the Record**

**The Honorable Fawn Sharp  
President, National Congress of American Indians  
Vice President, Quinault Indian Nation**

**The Honorable Kathy Castor**

- 1. President Sharp, the Build Back Better Act contains incentives like tax credits for new and used electric vehicles and investments in electric vehicle charging as well as rebates for residential appliance and equipment electrification. Would you agree that these types of investments can help reduce demand for oil and gas and reduce exposure to volatile fossil fuel prices?**

Thank you for your questions, Chair Castor. Incentives are a step in the right direction for promoting widespread use of electric vehicles, however there are significant obstacles for Indian Country. Large parts of Indian Country are rural, and thus underserved by electrical grids and lack of charging station infrastructure. Additionally, due to the rural nature and long distances among many Tribal communities, many Tribal citizens require electric vehicles with greater battery capacity and storage. Further, the cost for these vehicles, even with the current incentives, is prohibitive for many if not most Tribal citizens. Lastly, it's important to know where the electricity for these vehicles is being sourced from. Electric vehicles are not as beneficial if the electrical grid they are charged from is still powered by fossil fuels such as coal, or destructive hydroelectric dams.

- 2. President Sharp, could you describe some of the jobs that could be created in Tribal Nations as a result of investments in clean energy?**

There are several Tribal Nations employing their own citizens in their clean energy initiatives. The Moapa Southern Paiute Solar Project, located in Clark County, Nevada, co-owns a solar project with non-Tribal energy entities to create wages and benefits for Tribal citizens. Currently, the project provides over 115 construction jobs for Tribal citizens, with hopes to provide employment to at least 600 Tribal citizens throughout the lifetime of the project through construction and operations positions.

**3. President Sharp, should Congress explore strategies to reduce the carbon footprint of the manufacturing of climate solutions like wind and solar energy while supporting the transition to a clean energy economy?**

Yes, Congress should explore strategies to reduce carbon emissions in all sectors. When exploring strategies to reduce the carbon footprint, it's important to consult Tribal Nations to ensure any climate projects are not happening on culturally significant areas.

**4. President Sharp, do you believe that technologies like grid-scale storage and demand response can help achieve a more flexible grid that can integrate higher levels of renewable energy as we phase out unabated fossil fuel-fired electricity generation?**

Yes, short to long term storage technologies will be vital to ensure grids dispense uninterrupted electricity to the end users. Grid-scale storage is part of this solution.

**5. President Sharp, the Climate Crisis Action Plan recommends policies to advance a range of carbon-free electricity generation sources so that different regions and communities can advance solutions that work for them. Could you please explain why it is important for regions and communities to be able to have that choice and prioritize renewable energy if that is what they would prefer?**

Indian Country is a diverse place, each Tribal Nation has unique circumstances that require individualized electricity generation solutions that respect their inherent sovereignty. On top of regional and environmental differences, there are cultural aspects that may render some areas and means of electricity generation not suitable for some Tribal Nations. Federal and state actors must be aware of these factors, while acknowledging and embracing Indian Country as a willing partner in carbon-free electricity generation. Federal, state, and local actors must involve Tribal Nations when planning and developing electricity generation projects and all climate change projects to avoid issues of cultural and community concern.

**6. President Sharp, the Climate Crisis Action Plan recommends a broad suite of technologies to decarbonize the economy, including carbon capture and storage where there is a clear climate benefit. However, in the last year, there has been news coverage of carbon dioxide pipeline leaks sickening vulnerable communities. Link: [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/gassing-satartia-mississippi-co2-pipeline\\_n\\_60ddea9fe4b0ddef8b0ddc8f](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/gassing-satartia-mississippi-co2-pipeline_n_60ddea9fe4b0ddef8b0ddc8f). Do you agree that the development of carbon capture technologies should also include protections to promote environmental justice?**

Yes, the development of carbon capture technologies should include protections to promote environmental justice. Environmental justice should also be a consideration in the development of policies and approaches to addressing climate change overall to ensure that Tribal Nations are equitability included and appropriately consulted.

**7. President Sharp, can you describe some of the ways the Biden Administration is working to improve Tribal consultation and strengthen relationships with Tribal Nations?**

On January 26, 2021, President Biden signed a Presidential Memorandum titled “Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships.” implementing Executive Order 13175, “Consultation and Coordination With Indian Tribal Governments.” This memorandum reaffirmed the Obama Administration’s commitment and recognition of Tribal self-determination and the federal trust and treaty obligations to Tribal Nations. This year we have seen almost every federal agency host consultations on developing a consultation action plan. Since issuing this Presidential Memorandum, federal agencies have held more than 150 national-level consultation sessions totaling more than 350 hours of government-to-government interaction. With all the comments and feedback provided by Tribal Nations, we are eager to see the results and changes to consultation policies across federal agencies. We are grateful the Biden Administration is taking meaningful steps to be responsive to Tribal needs and aligning federal planning with our values and principles.

### **The Honorable Garret Graves**

- 1. President Sharp, you have historically been critical of the American oil and gas industry, saying in our hearing that you want to take big oil down. The Biden Department of Energy just released projections that show a significant increase in global demand for natural gas and oil in every modeled scenario – that is a global reality.**
  - a. Given that reality, do you think the best approach to meet this global demand is to shut down production in the United States, including on tribal lands, and cede supply to foreign entities – in particular state-owned enterprises in Russia, Iran, Venezuela, etc. – where lifecycle emissions are up to 50 percent higher than if produced in the United States?**

NCAI supports energy strategies to increase tribal self-determination over natural resources so that the Tribal Nations are able to choose the most suitable avenue of energy development for the benefit of their sovereignty and their citizens. As Indian Country is extremely diverse, this can take many forms, including renewable energy and fossil fuel extraction.

- b. To the extent there is global demand, shouldn’t we want that demand to be met by the lowest emission producers, like those in the United States, providing the most environmentally friendly production as well as creating and sustaining domestic jobs, including on tribal lands?**

NCAI supports energy strategies to increase tribal self-determination over natural resources so that the Tribal Nations are able to choose the most suitable avenue of energy development for the benefit of their sovereignty and their citizens. As Indian Country is extremely diverse, this can take many forms, including renewable energy and fossil fuel extraction.

- c. Some renewable energy technologies, such as wind turbines and solar panels, rely on fossil resources for their production and, for wind turbines, in their use. Given your opposition to oil and gas, do you oppose the use of wind or solar energy if oil, gas, or coal was involved in their production or use?**

NCAI does not hold a position for or against any energy resource being used for the development of renewable energy technologies.

- d. Both wind and solar are intermittent resources that today rely on natural gas for backup power. Do you support natural gas as a means to utilize wind and solar today or should we shut down all wind and solar that rely on natural gas until such time that it can be affordably relied upon without natural gas?**

NCAI supports the continued transition to renewable energy sources without interruption of electricity services to Tribal Nations and their citizens.

- 2. Chairman Baker has outlined an approach that will depend upon Tribal natural gas resources, utilizing American innovation, and producing affordable carbon free electricity on demand.**

**While there are lifecycle considerations - such as the exposure to slave labor when producing solar panels in China or the mining and uncontrolled coal powered processing of critical minerals in China - when it come to the use in the generation of electricity, can you explain the emissions difference in the electricity generation between the zero-emission natural gas technology that the Chairman Baker's testimony discusses, and the renewable options referenced in Ms. Thomas' testimony?**

The natural gas technology and renewable energy options that Chairman Baker and Pilar Thomas laid out during their testimonies were both valued options for Tribal Nations to consider in their own energy strategies. We defer to their testimony and expertise.

- 3. At our hearing you stated that NCAI supports “any Tribal nation’s desire to unlock the energy potential within their own sovereign lands.”**
  - a. Do you support the efforts of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe to utilize its resources?**

Yes, NCAI supports Tribal Nations’ choice to explore for their own self-determined energy strategies.

- b. Do you support the Southern Ute exercising their sovereignty to partner with NET Power to develop zero carbon emissions baseload power?**

Yes, NCAI supports energy strategies to increase tribal self-determination over natural resources so that the Tribal Nations can choose the most suitable avenue of energy development for the benefit of their sovereignty and their citizens.

- c. Would you be concerned with efforts from the Federal government to dictate whether or not the Southern Ute can affordably take advantage of their abundant resources — including natural gas—that is developed on their sovereign land?**

NCAI believes that any federal efforts that would limit the exercise of tribal self-determination must be consulted on with Tribal Nations, with free, prior, and informed consent required from the Nations being affected.

4. **I mentioned at the hearing that the Navajo Nation issued a press release following the Biden Administration’s decision on a 20-year ban on oil and gas drilling within a ten-mile radius of the Chaco Canyon Heritage Area. The Navajo Nation’s Speaker, Seth Damon, stated that, “*The Biden Administration bypassed previous requests to Congress for field hearings and for leaders to hear directly from our Navajo families affected in the Chaco Canyon region. The position of the Navajo Nation Council is for the creation of a 5-mile buffer within and around this sacred site. It is important that the federal government consider and work with our Navajo allottees to further advance development. The Administration must respect our tribal sovereignty and what the government-to-government relationship entails.*”**

- a. **Do you support the Biden Administration’s decision even though they ignored specific requests from the Navajo Nation for field hearings and consultation with the Tribe?**

NCAI defers this question to the Navajo Nation out of respect to their Sovereignty.

- b. **Have you called on, or will you call on the Biden Administration to reverse its decision and agree to the Navajo Nation’s request before deciding, and base the final decision on what is best for the Navajo Nation?**

NCAI defers this question to the Navajo Nation out of respect to their Sovereignty.

- c. **The United States has been the undisputed leader in carbon sequestration innovation. It is vital to look at the science and the facts regarding its viability and the huge global emissions reduction opportunities with successful deployment both here in the U.S. and worldwide. According to the experts, based on the science and the facts, carbon sequestration is safe, proven, and been widely used for decades. The referenced Department of Energy report<sup>1</sup> makes several key points:**

*“The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has invested more than \$1 billion during the past two decades through its Carbon Storage Research and Development (R&D) Program to develop the technologies and capabilities for widespread commercial deployment of geologic storage. This investment has made DOE a leader in this worldwide effort.”<sup>2</sup>*

*“CCUS projects supported by DOE and other organizations around the world, which in 2019 injected more than 25 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, have shown no adverse impacts to human health or the environment. And no DOE supported*

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

*project has observed migration of CO2 outside of the intended storage reservoir or confining cap rock.”<sup>3</sup>*

*“The assurances we can make today about the secure storage of CO2 in deep geologic reservoirs are based on: (1) a foundation of nearly five decades of oil and gas industry experience injecting CO2 into oil- and gas-filled formations; (2) the 20 years of technology advancements made from R&D programs like DOE’s Carbon Storage Program; (3) field-testing campaigns, such as the Regional Carbon Sequestration partnerships (RCSPs) that have validated monitoring tools and strategies and developed best practices; (4) improved understanding of the physics, chemistry, and mechanics involved throughout the life of a CCUS project.”<sup>4</sup>*

**Given that the United States Department of Energy has worked on energy technologies for decades, spanning multiple administrations of both political parties, do you view them as a qualified expert when it comes carbon capture and sequestration?**

NCAI understands and acknowledges that the Department of Energy has experts in the field of carbon sequestration and capture, and supports their efforts to reach out and collaborate with Indian Country and tribal experts.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.