

Introducing “Natural Gas Exports: Washington’s Revolving Door Fuels Climate Threat”

By [Steve Horn](#)

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[DeSmogBlog](#)

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In-depth Report: [Climate Change](#)

[DeSmogBlog’s Steve Horn](#) and [Republic Report’s Lee Fang](#) have co-written an in-depth report on the influence the [government-industry revolving door](#) has had on Big Oil’s ability to obtain four [liquefied natural gas \(LNG\)](#) export permits since 2012 from the Obama Administration.

Titled “[Natural Gas Exports: Washington’s Revolving Door Fuels Climate Threat](#),” the report [published here on DeSmogBlog](#) and [on Republic Report](#) serves as the launching pad of an ongoing investigation. It will act as the prelude of an extensive series of articles by both websites uncovering the LNG exports influence peddling machine.

The report not only exposes the lobbying apparatus that has successfully opened the door for LNG exports, but also the PR professionals paid to sell them to the U.S. public. It also exposes those who have gone through the “[reverse revolving door](#),” moving from industry back to government and sometimes back again.

It reveals that many former Obama Administration officials now work as lobbyists or PR professionals on behalf of the LNG exports industry, as do many former Bush Administration officials. So too do those with ties to potential 2016 Democratic Party presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton.

They include:

–[David L. Goldwyn](#) – Goldwyn is an industry consultant who also [works as an attorney at Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP](#), a go-to law firm for the oil and gas industry.



David Goldwyn; Photo Credit: U.S.
Department of State

[Sutherland represented Enterprise Product Partners](#) in its successful quest to obtain the [first permit in four decades to export crude oil](#) from the Obama Administration back in June and has also represented numerous firms seeking LNG export permits from the Obama Administration.

In addition to his consulting firm Goldwyn Global Strategies, David Goldwyn is a fellow at industry-funded think-tanks [Brookings Institution](#) and [Atlantic Council](#) and an outspoken advocate for both LNG exports and oil exports, though [his industry ties often go undisclosed](#) when he speaks in public or appears in the media.

While not working for industry, Goldwyn worked in both the Clinton and Obama Administrations.

He headed up the Obama State Department's influential Bureau of Energy Resources and helped found its [Global Shale Gas Initiative](#), a global fracking missionary force of sorts. For Clinton, Goldwyn worked as an assistant secretary of energy for international affairs for the U.S. Department of Energy [and in other high-level roles](#).

-[Heather Zichal](#) - Zichal formerly served as deputy assistant to President Obama for energy and climate change, leaving the White House in October 2013.



Not long after leaving, [Zichal accepted a spot on the board of directors for Cheniere Energy](#), the first company to receive an LNG export permit from President Obama in April 2012 for its Louisiana-based [Sabine Pass LNG](#) facility.

While working for the Obama White House, Zichal had [many private meetings with Cheniere officials](#), including with Cheniere CEO Charif Souki, DeSmogBlog revealed.

Prior to working for Obama, Zichal worked for then-Senator John Kerry.

-[David Leiter](#) - Leiter is the president and founder of the lobbying firm [MLStrategies, LLC](#). Leiter previously served as chief of staff for then-Sen. John Kerry (D-Ma.) and as deputy assistant secretary of energy under President Bill Clinton.

[Leiter now lobbies on behalf of Sempra Energy](#), owner of the [Cameron LNG](#) export facility in Louisiana, which [received final approval](#) from the U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) earlier this year. His wife [Tammy Luzzatto](#) formerly served as chief of staff to then-Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY).

-[Blue State Digital](#) and [Blue Engine Media](#) - A key email list-keeping platform and public relations firm for the Democratic Party, respectively, both firms have done the bidding of the LNG exports industry.



Blue State maintains the email list for [America's Natural Gas Alliance \(ANGA\)](#), while [Blue Engine until recently did PR work for LNG industry front group, "Our Energy Moment."](#)

-[David A. Merkel](#) - [Merkel formerly worked for the Bush Administration State Department](#), in which he served as deputy assistant secretary for European and Eurasian affairs. [He formerly worked for the International Republican Institute](#), an offshoot of the [National Endowment for Democracy \(NED\)](#).



David Merkel; Photo
Credit: U.S.
Department of State

After leaving the Bush Administration, Merkel and many other former Bush Administration

officials founded the Texas-based LNG export company UnitedLNG, which co-owned the Main Pass Energy Hub with Freeport McMoran.

[United LNG has since disbanded](#) and taken down its website.

But while it still existed, [Joe Davis](#) — former principal deputy director of public affairs and spokesman for former Bush Administration Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham and communications director and policy advisor for Abraham when he was a U.S. Senator — [lobbied on behalf of the firm](#).

– [Spencer Abraham](#) – Chairman and CEO of [The Abraham Group](#), he formerly served as U.S. Secretary of Energy for the Bush Administration and is a former Republican Senator from Michigan.



Spencer Abraham; Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

The Abraham Group has provided crucial support for Cheniere's lobbying efforts. Many top Abraham aides now work directly in-house lobbying for Cheniere.

This is just a tiny taste of what is in the 16-page, 5,000+ word report.

At its core, "[Natural Gas Exports: Washington's Revolving Door Fuels Climate Threat](#)" is a sequel to DeSmogBlog's 2011 report titled, "[Fracking the Future: How Unconventional Gas Threatens our Water, Health, and Climate](#)."

Please stay tuned for much more to come on the topic both here on DeSmogBlog and over on [Republic Report](#).

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