



December 12, 2023

Via Email: GovPublicRecords@la.gov

Tina Vanichchagorn
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Public Records Act Request: Biden and China's Monkey Island LNG Deal

Dear Ms. Vanichchagorn,

America First Legal Foundation is a national, nonprofit organization working to promote the rule of law in the United States, prevent executive overreach, and ensure due process and equal protection for all Americans, all to promote public knowledge and understanding of the law and individual rights guaranteed under the Constitution and laws of the United States. To that end, we file Freedom of Information Act requests on issues of pressing public concern, then disseminate the information we obtain, making documents broadly available to the public, scholars, and the media. Using our editorial skills to turn raw materials into distinct work, we distribute that work to a national audience through traditional and social media platforms. AFL has over 186,000 followers on X, and our Founder and President has over 550,000 followers on X.

I. Background

On September 27, 2023, the U.S. House Committees on Oversight and Accountability, the Judiciary, and Ways and Means, announced that their impeachment inquiry is investigating foreign money received by the Biden family and President Joe Biden's involvement in his family's foreign business entanglements.¹ The evidence shows that, even after Joe Biden left the White House in 2017, members of the Biden family contacted individuals in the Louisiana Governor's Office in furtherance of the Monkey Island LNG deal on behalf of Chinese nationals backed by the Chinese Communist Party.

¹ MEMORANDUM FROM CHAIRMEN JIM JORDAN, JAMES COMER, AND JASON SMITH, TO MEMBERS OF THE H. COMM. ON THE JUDICIARY, H. COMM. ON OVERSIGHT & ACCOUNTABILITY, AND H. COMM. ON WAYS & MEANS (Sept. 27, 2023) (available at <https://bit.ly/3PZ66Q5>).

Ye Jianming was the former deputy secretary-general of an international outreach arm for the People Liberation Army and a “front organization” that “performs dual roles of intelligence collection conducting propaganda and perception management campaigns.”² Through his company, CEFC, Ye Jianming ran a business empire worth an estimated \$44 billion to implement China’s Belt and Road Initiative and “obtain overseas resources and serve the national strategy.”³ Ye Jianming used CEFC to bribe and corruptly influence foreign officials.⁴ Gongwen “Kevin” Dong was Ye Jianming’s “CEFC emissary” in the United States.⁵

In March 2017—soon after Joe Biden left the White House—Ye Jianming’s shell company made a \$3 million payment to Hunter Biden’s associate, and over \$ 1 million of that amount went to members of the Biden family in smaller increments over sixteen separate payments to at least five different bank accounts.⁶ When Ye Jianming met with Hunter Biden in Miami later that year to discuss their future business partnership, he allegedly gifted Hunter Biden a 2.8-carat diamond worth an estimated \$80,000.⁷

On July 30, 2021, Hunter Biden sent CEFC associate Raymond Zhao a WhatsApp message:

I am sitting here with my father [Joe Biden] and we would like to understand why the commitment made has not been fulfilled. I am very concerned that the Chairman [Ye Jianming] has either changed his mind or broken our deal without telling me or that he is unaware of the promises and assurances that have been made have not been kept ... I will make certain that between the man sitting next to me and every person he knows and my ability to forever hold a grudge that you will regret not following my direction.⁸

On August 2, 2017, Hunter Biden sent an e-mail to Gongwen Dong stating:

² MAJORITY STAFF OF H. COMM. ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY, 118TH CONG., SECOND BANK RECORDS MEMORANDUM FROM THE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE’S INVESTIGATION INTO THE BIDEN FAMILY’S INFLUENCE PEDDLING AND BUSINESS SCHEMES at 19–20 (May 10, 2023) (available at <https://bit.ly/3LpgL5l>)

³ *Id.* at 20.

⁴ *Id.* at 21.

⁵ *Id.* at 22.

⁶ *Id.* at 30–31.

⁷ *Id.* at 28.

⁸ Joseph Ziegler, Special Agent, Internal Revenue Serv., *Exhibit 300: Relevant Backup Messages* at 4 (Sep. 8, 2023) (available at <https://bit.ly/3Q0000j>).

My Understanding is that the original agreement with the Director was for consulting fees based on introductions alone a[t] rate a \$10M per year for a three year guarantee total of \$30M. The Chairman changed the deal after we me[t] in MIAMI TO A MUCH MORE LASTING AND LUCRATIVE ARRANGEMENT to create a holding company 50% percent [sic] owned by ME and 50% owned by him.⁹

Later that day, Raymond Zhao followed up with a WhatsApp message to Hunter Biden: “Hi Hunter, director asked me to extend to you that Kevin [Gongwen Dong] has reported to him about your discussion. He supports your proposition and will act correspondingly.”¹⁰

Hunter Biden (through Owasco PC) and Gongwen Dong (through Hudson West V LLC) formed Hudson West III LLC together with each as 50 percent owners.¹¹ Gongwen Dong registered many corporate entities in the United States, including variations of the name “Hudson West,” and effected transactions to the benefit of Ye Jianming.¹² Between August 2017 and October 2018, Hudson West III LLC sent over \$4 million to companies related to Hunter Biden and his uncle, James Biden.¹³ Subpoenaed bank records recently released by the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability revealed that Owasco PC made direct monthly payments to Joe Biden.¹⁴

The stated purpose of Hudson West III LLC was to “source and secure mutually agreed investment and acquisition opportunities for Hudson and/or its Affiliates ... with respect to Projects ... in global and/or domestic infrastructure, energy, financial services, high-tech and other strategic sectors.”¹⁵ Under the terms of the agreement, Owasco was bound by an exclusivity clause that prohibited them from pitching “strategic sector” deals or providing services to anyone else, subject to their Chinese business partner’s right of first refusal.¹⁶

⁹ Email from Hunter Biden to Gongwen Dong (Aug. 2, 2021) (available at <https://bit.ly/3rKmCvy>).

¹⁰ Joseph Ziegler, Special Agent, Internal Revenue Serv., *Exhibit 300: Relevant Backup Messages* at 5 (Sep. 8, 2023) (available at <https://bit.ly/3Q0000j>).

¹¹ MAJORITY STAFF OF H. COMM. ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY, 118TH CONG., SECOND BANK RECORDS MEMORANDUM FROM THE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE’S INVESTIGATION INTO THE BIDEN FAMILY’S INFLUENCE PEDDLING AND BUSINESS SCHEMES at 23 (May 10, 2023) (available at <https://bit.ly/3LpgL5l>).

¹² *Id.* at 22.

¹³ *Id.* at 24.

¹⁴ *Press Release: Comer Releases Direct Monthly Payments to Joe Biden from Hunter Biden’s Business Entity*, H. COMM. ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY (Dec. 4, 2023), <https://bit.ly/3RAxXbo>.

¹⁵ Amended and Restated Limited Liability Company Agreement of Hudson West III LLC § 1.2 (Aug. 2, 2017) (available at <https://bit.ly/3TjSmCO>).

¹⁶ *Id.* § 12.11.

In James Biden's interview with federal investigators, he recalled that their Chinese business partners were looking for Liquefied Natural Gas ("LNG") deals at the time.¹⁷ On October 29, 2017, Gongwen Dong's employee, JiaQi Bao, emailed Hunter Biden, emphasizing the significance need to invest in a Louisiana LNG deal, "[t]hrough you [Hunter] and Uncle Jim's connection, with Monkey Island ... as a starting point."¹⁸ Mr. Bao explained that the deal would open the door to other projects in the region, since "you [Hunter] are the best person to help your friend Ye [Jianming] ... because you know a lot of folks in the area and you have the access to decision-makers."¹⁹ James Biden recalled to federal investigators that the Monkey Island deal involved an island about fifty to one hundred miles off the coast of Louisiana with a clear passage for loading and offloading LNG.²⁰ James Biden also recalled talking with people in the Louisiana Governor's Office regarding the permits and recalled that it was supposed to be on a fast track.²¹

While the Monkey Island LNG deal ultimately fell through, the evidence shows that members of the Biden family communicated with your office on behalf of foreign business interests, even after Joe Biden left the White House in 2017. Accordingly, disclosure about the Biden family, their associates, and their Chinese business partners' contacts with your office is needed to inform the public about this most pressing issue. We look forward to your prompt and forthright assistance with this matter.

II. Requested Records

Pursuant to the Louisiana Public Records Act, LA. STAT. ANN. § 44:1 *et seq.*, AFL requests copies of the following records:

1. All records of communications to or from any employee of the Office of the Governor with Joe Biden, including but not limited to the following email addresses: "robinware456@gmail.com," "JRBWare@gmail.com," and "Robert.L.Peters@pci.gov"
2. All records of communications to or from any employee of the Office of the Governor with Hunter Biden, including but not limited to the following email addresses: "rhbdc@icloud.com," "rhb@rspdc.com," "hbiden@senecaga.com," and "hbiden@rosemontseneca.com"

¹⁷ Joseph Ziegler, Special Agent, Internal Revenue Serv., *Exhibit 401: IRS CI Memorandum of Interview with James Biden on September 29, 2022*, at 8 (available at <https://bit.ly/46pgRSV>).

¹⁸ Email from JiaQi Bao to Hunter Biden (Oct. 29, 2017) (available at <https://bit.ly/4ajKWWg>).

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ Joseph Ziegler, Special Agent, Internal Revenue Serv., *Exhibit 401: IRS CI Memorandum of Interview with James Biden on September 29, 2022*, at 7 (available at [available at https://bit.ly/46pgRSV](https://bit.ly/46pgRSV)).

²¹ *Id.*

3. All records of communications to or from any employee of the Office of the Governor with James Biden, including but not limited to the email address “jbiden@lionhallgp.com”
4. All records of communications to or from any employee of the Office of the Governor with the email address “jwbao17@gmail.com”
5. All records of communications to or from any employee of the Office of the Governor with the email address “gongwen.dong@gmail.com”
6. All records of communications to or from any employee of the Office of the Governor with the email address “mervyn.yan@gmail.com”
7. All records of communications to or from any employee of the Office of the Governor with an email address with the domain name “@lionhallgp.com”
8. All records of communications to or from any employee of the Office of the Governor with an email address with the domain name “@rosemontseneca.com”
9. All records of communications to or from any employee of the Office of the Governor with an email address with the domain name “@senecaga.com”
10. All records of communications to or from any employee of the Office of the Governor with an email address with the domain name “@mkyisland.com”
11. All other records containing the words: “Monkey Island LNG,” “MILNG” or “Magnolia LNG”
12. All records relating to the processing of this request

For purposes of this request, the term “communications” includes, and is not limited to, emails, phone calls, and text messages. The relevant time period for requests 1–11 is August 1, 2017–March 31, 2018.

III. Fee Waiver

Pursuant to LA. STAT. ANN. § 44:32(C)(2), AFL requests a waiver of all search and copying fees associated with this request, as use of the copies “will be limited to a public purpose.” AFL will make your records and your responses publicly available, and the public’s understanding of your activities will be enhanced through AFL’s analysis and publication of the requested records. As a nonprofit organization, AFL does not have a commercial purpose and the release of the information requested is not in AFL’s financial interest. If AFL’s request for a fee waiver is not granted in full, please contact us immediately upon making that determination.

IV. Processing and Production

Louisiana’s Public Records Act requires a response within five business days. LA. STAT. ANN. § 44:32(D). The Governor and his internal staff must “preserve all records” under LA. STAT. ANN. § 44:5. If access to the records requested takes longer than

expected, please provide information about the extenuating circumstances delaying the response. If any or all parts of this request are denied, please cite each specific exemption you feel justifies the refusal to release the records and provide notification of the appeal procedures available under the law.

To accelerate the release of responsive records, AFL welcomes production on an agreed rolling basis. If possible, please provide responsive records in an electronic format by email. Alternatively, please provide responsive records in native format or in PDF format on a USB drive.

If you have any questions about our request or believe further discussions regarding search and processing would facilitate more efficient production of records of interest to AFL, then please contact me at FOIA@aflegal.org.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

/s/ Michael Ding

Michael Ding

America First Legal Foundation