

New disclosures raise more questions about Obama's Energy pick

*MIT fracking study author, Anthony Meggs, failed to disclose gas company position that paid him millions
* Moniz failed to disclose lucrative industry consulting arrangements*

Buffalo, NY – New disclosures are exposing the severity of conflicts of interest surrounding an MIT fracking study led by Energy nominee Ernest Moniz, who is going before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources committee on Tuesday. The disclosures are highlighted in a [new research brief from the Public Accountability Initiative \(PAI\)](#), a watchdog research organization.

PAI first raised questions about conflicts of interest surrounding the influential and widely-publicized MIT fracking study in a report released last month. The PAI report found that the MIT study promoted shale gas and fracking without noting that several key report authors, including study chair Moniz, had paid industry gigs. The PAI report prompted responses from the White House and MIT last month, though Moniz has declined comment.

Recently-released financial disclosures are shedding additional light on the conflicts of interest surrounding the study. Forms filed with Canadian regulators show that the gas company Talisman Energy paid MIT study co-chair Anthony Meggs \$4.5 million in 2012 (his 2011 compensation is not publicly available). Meggs' Talisman compensation was not previously known.*

Meggs downplayed fracking's environmental impacts at the press conference for the MIT study, but failed to disclose his lucrative position at Talisman, which he had accepted the month prior to the report release. PAI's review of the MIT study's environmental impacts section found minimal scientific data to back his claims. Talisman has racked up numerous environmental violations in the Marcellus Shale, where it is a major fracker.

"Moniz promoted the junk science of gas industry millionaires as if it was independent research," said Kevin Connor, PAI's director. **"If he thinks that is ethical and appropriate, then he probably does not belong at an academic research institution, much less in public office."**

In financial forms filed with the Obama administration, Moniz reported paid consulting gigs for BP, GE, and energy private equity firm Riverstone Holdings, in addition to his lucrative board membership at ICF International, a firm with oil and gas industry ties which sells a proprietary gas market modeling tool. Moniz's Riverstone tie is significant in that he received \$75,000 in compensation from the company in 2012. As the *Boston Globe* reported, Riverstone is a major oil and gas investor. Moniz has consulted for the company since 2008.

"Moniz's industry gigs are clearly relevant to his research on fracking and constitute significant conflicts of interest," added Connor. **"He was paid by an alphabet soup of oil and gas industry companies, consultants, and investors at the same time he was pushing industry talking points. He was trading on credibility that he does not deserve."**

As energy secretary, Moniz will have oversight of the permitting process for liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports. As the PAI report noted, MIT study author John Deutch sits on the board of LNG company Cheniere Energy. Cheniere has the only federal permits to export LNG from the lower 48 states. Cheniere's stock has risen 150% since the MIT study was released in June 2011. The study endorsed LNG exports.

The University of Texas initiated an investigation in the wake of similar revelations regarding a pro-fracking study overseen by a professor who failed to disclose that he was a highly-compensated gas company board member. As a result, the university retracted the study, the director of the Energy Institute that issued the report resigned, and the university revised its conflict of interest policies. MIT has taken no action to investigate the natural gas study. A [petition](#) calling on MIT to investigate Moniz and the MIT

Energy Initiative has been initiated by CREDO Action.

Moniz is being introduced at his nomination hearing by Brent Scowcroft, who has strong ties to the MIT natural gas study's advisory chair, Mack McLarty. The Scowcroft Group lists McLarty Associates as one of two principal partners on its website, and also advertises an energy and mining lobbying practice. Former Senator Jeff Bingaman is also introducing Moniz.

PAI's research brief is available here: <http://public-accountability.org/2013/04/new-disclosures-raise-more-questions-about-obamas-energy-pick/>

** A significant part of Meggs' compensation package was clawed back when he left Talisman in early 2013, though he appears to have received a multi-million dollar severance payment. Meggs' 2011 compensation is not available*
