



The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Johnson & Chairman Grassley:

I have received your letter dated December 3, 2019 requesting certain information from Blue Star Strategies, LLC (Blue Star Strategies).

Blue Star Strategies is a small, woman owned government and public affairs firm co-founded by Sally Painter and me.¹ This year marks Blue Star Strategies' 10th Anniversary. Prior to founding Blue Star Strategies, Sally Painter and I were partners in a bi-partisan government affairs firm, Dutko Worldwide. Dutko Worldwide's partners included Mark Irion, Ron Kaufman, Brad Card and Gary Andres – all well-known professionals in the government affairs sector. Sally Painter and I led the international business at Dutko Worldwide. In 2009, we decided to launch Blue Star Strategies.

Blue Star Strategies is unique in that the government and public affairs practice is exclusively international. We assist foreign entities (public and private) by providing an array of government and public affairs services. From time to time, those services include advocacy before government agencies, including the U.S. government. We also assist U.S. private, commercial enterprises in Europe, Eurasia and throughout Latin America.

As early as 2002, the founders of the firm began working with Eastern European countries and countries formerly within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) to develop their strategic security plans to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). To achieve that end, we worked closely with the Bush Administration and other Members of the NATO Alliance and saw several countries – including Bulgaria, Latvia and Estonia – be accepted into NATO. In 2004, again in collaboration with the Bush Administration, we began our work in Ukraine – initially to see the fraudulent 2005 election overturned, and Viktor Yushchenko elected President of Ukraine.

I outline our history so that you would understand Blue Star Strategies' track record of achieving positive results for governments and private enterprises from Eastern European and former USSR countries. Based

¹ A third individual, Gabriel Zinny was a minority shareholder at the time of the company's founding. Mr. Zinny is no longer with the firm and was not at the firm during the firm's work with Burisma.



on our success, we receive referrals from current and former clients, colleagues, and other professionals when they believe we have the expertise to provide the services required. Burisma is among several clients referred to our firm. Given the questions raised in your letter, I note that Hunter Biden did not refer Burisma to the firm.

The firm continues to work in the private and public sectors in Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltics, the Balkans, and the Caucasus regions and throughout Latin America.

We were engaged by Burisma in November 2015 to provide a range of government, public affairs, and legal services. The U.S. component of our work has focused on fact-finding as outlined below, partnerships with private institutions, and discussions with appropriate government and non-governmental organizations regarding Ukraine's energy security needs. In Ukraine, we provide legal advice and public affairs services. Burisma continues as a client of the firm.

Your letter asserts several claims referenced primarily to two media sources: the Washington Examiner and The Hill. It is important to inform the Committees that the assertions made, and the conclusions drawn from those assertions, are incorrect. While Sally Painter and I met Mr. Amos Hochstein, it was not "to convince Hochstein. . .that Burisma was on the level and did not warrant further investigation," as stated in your letter. The initial meeting with Mr. Hochstein was to understand his and the State Department's position regarding an independent energy company, Burisma. At that meeting we learned Mr. Hochstein's view – although it was not stated to be the State Department's view. There was a subsequent meeting with Mr. Hochstein that included Burisma's U.S. counsel, John Buretta. While Sally Painter attended the meeting, the counsel led the briefing. The first meeting with Mr. Hochstein was on December 10, 2015. The second meeting was on March 24, 2016.

The second incorrect assertion is that I leveraged Hunter Biden's name for a meeting with then Under Secretary of State Catherine Novelli. To substantiate that claim, your letter references a note written by someone presumably in the State Department. The note was not written by me. The fact is, I have known Catherine Novelli for over two decades and did not need to use anyone's name – including Hunter Biden's – to obtain a meeting. Ms. Novelli agreed to the meeting at my request. The purpose of the meeting was to understand the State Department's position regarding Burisma, as well as how the State Department came to that position. The date of the meeting was March 1, 2016.²

Although not referenced in the Committees' letter, as part of our fact-finding Sally Painter and I had meetings with State Department professionals³ in Washington, DC and at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv wherein Burisma was mentioned. During a trip to Kyiv, we requested a meeting with Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt to discuss several issues, one of which included understanding how he came to his

² John Buretta, Burisma's U.S. Counsel attended the meeting and briefed Undersecretary Novelli.

³ Prior to meeting Ambassador Pyatt, we had two professional staff meetings at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv. On December 14, 2015 we met William Laitinen, Economic Counselor at the Embassy, to understand his view of Ukraine's economic situation. The meeting had not been scheduled to discuss Burisma as we had several other corporate clients interested in Ukraine's economic situation. To be fully transparent, we disclosed that we were working with Burisma and inquired as to his views of the company. Also, on December 14, 2015 we met USAID Representative Steve Gonyea to understand USAID's decision-making process. Burisma had offered to assist USAID during a gas shortage in regions under Russian attack and we were inquiring about the decision to decline the company's assistance.



position about Burisma.⁴ A year later, we met Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch to discuss a variety of issues – Burisma was raised in our discussions. As it related to Burisma, the purpose of the meeting was to understand whether Ambassador Yovanovitch held the same view of Burisma as Ambassador Pyatt. The meeting with Ambassador Pyatt was on December 16, 2015. The meeting with Ambassador Yovanovitch was on December 8, 2016.

On December 14, 2016 we met Reggie Singh, Ukraine Desk Officer, to discuss economic and energy security in Ukraine and the role of independent gas companies such as Burisma⁵. On November 2, 2017 we met Andrea Lockwood, Deputy Assistant Secretary of International Affairs at the Energy Department, to discuss the role independent gas companies such as Burisma could play to better ensure energy security in Ukraine.

Burisma purchases extraction and other equipment from several U.S. companies. The cost of this specialized equipment exceeds \$80 million over 5 years. As a result of the Trump Administration’s focus on U.S. jobs, we met officials at the Departments of State and Commerce who were interested in foreign company purchases from U.S. manufacturers that resulted in job creation. At the State Department we met Melissa Simpson, then Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, and Brian DaRin. The State Department meeting was held on November 21, 2018. At the Department of Commerce, we met Matthew Edwards, Director, and Boris Chumuk, Desk Officer, of the Office of Russia, Ukraine & Eurasia to discuss Burisma’s U.S. equipment purchases. The Department of Commerce meeting was held on November 27, 2018. Among several recommendations from that meeting was to meet Charles Phillips, Deputy Senior Commercial Officer and Heather Bell, Director from the Department of Energy at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv. The meeting with Mr. Phillips and Ms. Bell meeting took place on February 19, 2019.

We had no meetings related to Burisma at the Executive Office of the President or the Office of the Vice President during the Obama Administration.

In response to your request outlined in item #2 of your letter, we include an appendix (Appendix A)⁶ containing records between Blue Star and U.S. officials specifically related to Burisma. Due to the Confidentiality clause and the Client Work Product Ownership clause of the binding contract between Blue Star Strategies and Burisma, we are unable to provide copies of documents requested in item #1b of your letter.

During my meetings in Ukraine with Ukrainian officials, I was working in my capacity as “Of Counsel” to Burisma in collaboration with Burisma’s U.S. counsel, John Buretta. Due to the nature of those meetings, disclosure of the discussions would be a breach of client confidentiality and the attorney-client privilege.

⁴ Ambassador Pyatt had been sharply critical of Burisma in one of his official public speeches in his capacity as the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine.

⁵ Mr. Singh included colleagues from the State Department’s Economics office. We have no record of the attendees.

⁶ The records include records for meetings that occurred, and records for meetings requested that did not occur. We have indicated the dates of those meetings that did occur in the letter. Where the records refer to a discussion of issues unrelated to Burisma we have redacted the reference. Where the records specifically identify a Burisma representative we have redacted the name to adhere to the confidentiality clause in our agreement.



Finally, I want to assure the Committees' Chairmen that at no time did I or anyone else in the firm working on behalf of Burisma collaborate or coordinate the development or implementation of our work with Hunter Biden. We had no discussions or meetings with Mr. Biden regarding our contractual agreement with Burisma or Blue Star Strategies' terms of engagement. Mr. Biden played no role in Blue Star Strategies' work on behalf of Burisma – either in its limited scope in the U.S. or its more extensive scope in Ukraine. Mr. Biden has no role in Blue Star Strategies and holds no financial interest in Blue Star Strategies.

The information provided in this letter is based on the firm's best recollection and after a review of our records.⁷ Consistent with recommendations from the IRS we retain records, including client records, for a period of 5 years. We will continue to preserve records relevant to this inquiry.

I trust that this letter responds to your inquiry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Tramontano", written over a horizontal line.

Karen Tramontano
Chief Executive Officer
Blue Star Strategies, LLC

⁷ Earlier this year, Blue Star Strategies embarked on an office renovation that included major changes in our telecommunications and computer systems. While we are confident that the search of our records has resulted in producing records responsive to your inquiry major systems changes have their challenges.

