

## **Watchdog Files IG Complaint Over Possible Ethics Violation Involving ANWR Leasing Plan**

*Laura Daniel-Davis accused of improper participation in a matter involving her former employer*

Today, watchdog Protect the Public's Trust announced it has filed a [complaint](#) with the Inspector General (IG) at the Department of the Interior (DOI). The complaint alleges that Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management Laura Daniel-Davis may have improperly participated in matters relating to the oil and gas program in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), in violation of federal ethics laws and the Biden Ethics Pledge.

Oil and gas extraction in ANWR, also known as the Coastal Plain of Alaska, has been one of the nation's most controversial energy issues for nearly 40 years. It has been fiercely opposed by environmental and conservation organizations, including the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), where Ms. Daniel-Davis worked prior to joining the Biden Administration. While she was Chief of Policy and Advocacy at NWF, the organization was a party to a lawsuit challenging aspects of the program, including an August 2020 leasing plan, proposed seismic permits, and actual leases offered in January 2021.

Based upon documents PPT obtained from a whistleblower and Freedom of Information Act request, Ms. Daniel-Davis' involvement in the issue may have crossed the line into personal and substantial involvement in a particular matter involving her former employer. Within six months at Interior, Ms. Daniel-Davis had exercised her official authority to achieve practically all of the legal remedies sought by her former employer in court. Even worse, the legal arguments she relied on to do so were strikingly similar to those she developed and written in her former employer's legal filings. Subsequently, the parties to the litigation cited Ms. Daniel-Davis' actions as one of the reasons to respectively support or take no position on the Department's request for a stay in the lawsuit. Neither of these documents nor any others available to the public indicate Ms. Daniel-Davis received authorization to participate in this matter from a designated agency ethics official.

"On an issue that has been such a huge magnet for controversy, one would think the Department of the Interior would want to make sure that all the t's were crossed and the i's dotted," stated Michael Chamberlain, Director of Protect the Public's Trust. "But, as evidenced by the recent IG report revealing an ethics violation by one of the Department's top leadership as well as the potential missteps PPT has uncovered, adherence to ethics obligations does not appear to be at the top of the priority list at Secretary Haaland's Department. It's little wonder the American public's trust in government is at an all-time low."