

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 26, 2017

The Honorable Eugene L. Dodaro  
The Comptroller General of the United States  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We are writing to request that you investigate the use of public money to reimburse work completed under a contract between Whitefish Energy Holdings, LLC (Whitefish) and the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA, or Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica) to restore PREPA's electric power system in the wake of Hurricane Maria. Restoring and rebuilding the grid is central to the public health, welfare, safety, and economic growth of Puerto Rico. Like all U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans deserve no less.

Recent media reports in multiple publications have raised serious allegations about the nature and circumstances surrounding the letting of a \$300 million contract on October 17 by PREPA, the publicly owned utility that serves the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, to Whitefish, incorporated in the state of Montana, to restore PREPA's electric power system in the wake of Hurricane Maria.

Among the principal concerns raised in these reports are the potentially inflated costs of time and material in the contract relative to comparable at-cost utility mutual aid agreements; the opaque and limited nature of PREPA's bidding process that led to the contract letting; and the contemporaneous communications between Whitefish and senior members of the federal Executive branch, including Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. We note that since the execution of an Emergency Master Service Agreement on September 26 between PREPA and Whitefish, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), using Public Assistance funds authorized under the Stafford Act, has already awarded at least two expedited funding grants worth \$171 million to PREPA.

In addition, we ask you to examine, in the context of the ultimate use of public money, whether it was wise of PREPA not to activate mutual aid assistance from mainland utilities, given the at-cost basis of such assistance, the federal disaster declaration on September 20, and the authorization of 100 percent federal cost-share for emergency protective measures on September 26. We also ask you coordinate with the Puerto Rico Energy Commission in any review it

undertakes, under the authority established by Act 57-2014 of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, into whether this contract is in the public interest.

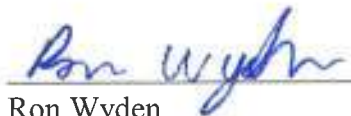
We are intent, along with many of our colleagues in Congress, on providing the hardworking federal workers, private sector workers, utility crews, and Puerto Ricans the necessary federal resources to restore electric power immediately on the island and to rebuild the grid in a more resilient way that facilitates long-term economic growth. It is essential that as we deliver these resources we have confidence the funds are being spent wisely and cost-effectively. We will rely on your investigative work and that of Inspectors General at the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies to inform that confidence and any potential steps necessary to address fraudulent or otherwise inappropriate use of public money.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Maria Cantwell".

Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ron Wyden".

Ron Wyden  
Ranking Member  
United States Senator