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# Letters contradict DesJarlais' denial that he pushed for swift loan guarantees

Request to expedite funding for Oak Ridge project was sent 2 months after Solyndra failure

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Tennessee's U.S. Rep. Scott DesJarlais, R-Jasper / Erik Schelzig / File / Associated Press

Written by Gregory Korte USA TODAY

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WASHINGTON — Tennessee's U.S. Rep. Scott DesJarlais, R-Jasper, told Energy Secretary Steven Chu last week that he never asked the Department of Energy to speed up loan guarantees to projects in his district.

But that's exactly what he did, according to congressional support letters obtained by USA TODAY.

"Any delays put the project at risk," said a letter last May to the Office of Management and Budget signed by 15 members, including DesJarlais, and fellow Tennessee Republicans Charles Fleischmann and John Duncan. The letter said it was "imperative" that a \$2 billion loan guarantee to USEC Inc. be "advanced expeditiously." The loan guarantee would back the American

Centrifuge project, a uranium enrichment program that the company says will create 370 jobs in Oak Ridge and an additional 1,094 indirect jobs in Tennessee.

And even as late as Nov. 4, DesJarlais, Fleischmann and Duncan signed on to another letter saying "quick action is paramount" and asking for "immediate action on funding."

That was two months after the bankruptcy of solar panel maker Solyndra despite a \$535 million federal loan guarantee. Solyndra's failure prompted Congress to issue subpoenas and hold hearings about pressure by the White House to speed up a decision on the loan guarantee so that Vice President Joe Biden could announce it.

At one hearing last Nov. 17, Chu testified that he had received nearly 500 letters from members of Congress supporting the loan programs. "We appreciate the support that the loan programs

receive from many members of Congress who have urged us to accelerate our efforts and to fund worthy projects in their states," he told a House subcommittee.

But in a letter to Chu last week, 19 GOP members of Congress — including DesJarlais and Rep. Stephen Fincher, R-Frog Jump — defended those letters, accusing Chu of "intentionally making misguided and far-reaching statements to cover your own failures."

"These letters should in no way give you and your staff the belief that members are specifically asking you to 'accelerate'

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