

Gazette-Mail editorial: Manchin's curiosity about China deal warranted

- July 16, 2019

Last month, the *Gazette-Mail* [published an editorial](#) in which we explored some of the questions around a nebulous deal concerning a Chinese energy company investing \$84 billion in West Virginia. It's been two years since Gov. Jim Justice and his administration made the announcement and no details have been forthcoming.

Turns out Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., is curious, too, and with good reason.

Last week, Manchin brought those questions up during a Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing, mainly in regard to national security.

“Do you all know about this deal they want to make with West Virginia, my state? They've said they're going to invest [\$83.7 billion] over 20 years. You can imagine that kind of carrot being swung out there, it's tremendous for a small state.”

Manchin expressed frustration that he, like everyone else who's asked about the deal, can't get any information about a memorandum of understanding that was supposedly signed between a Chinese energy company and the state government in West Virginia.

Manchin raised the concern that the Chinese government having a significant foothold in energy infrastructure in West Virginia could compromise national energy security, give the Chinese access to significant American resources and undermine the United States' own building stock for manufacturing. He also questioned why the current presidential administration hasn't done more to intervene with American Ethane, a company that, ironically, is operated by a Russian oligarch.

So far, the entire project, which was hailed as the salvation of West Virginia's economy at the time, looks like nothing but smoke and confetti. There's been no movement and the Justice administration rarely mentions it unless asked. The reply has typically been a guarded "it's happening" and not much else.

It's time for state government to level with the people of West Virginia on what exactly is happening here. Not only did the announcement raise false hopes, but the question of national security is valid and important. We urge the governor or someone in his administration to give an official update on the project.

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