The Honorabl

e Jennifer Granholm

Secretary

U.S. Department of Energy

1000 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm:

The Biden Administration continues to pursue policies that suppress domestic energy production and drive fuel prices higher for consumers. We are concerned that the president may soon impose an oil and gas export ban that will result in even higher gas prices, supply chain issues, global market upheaval, and reduced energy security for the U.S. and our allies. While you have not confirmed a ban will be imposed, recent reports by top officials suggest Administration interest in restricting exports of refined petroleum products. As such, we request documents and information to learn more about the Administration’s potential plans to ban oil and gas exports, as well as the Department of Energy’s (DOE) role in the potential misuse of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) as a means to increase domestic fuel supply.

On October 5, 2022, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its affiliates (OPEC+) announced their intent to cut oil production by two million barrels a day—the equivalent of two percent of current global yields—beginning in November. The promise of production cutbacks amid a preexisting supply shortage will increase fuel prices, adding to the recent surges in gasoline prices this month after briefly falling in September from an all-time-high of $5 a gallon in June. In a move that sought to lower gas prices leading up to the midterm elections, the Biden Administration asked OPEC+ to delay production cuts until December—a proposal which OPEC+ rejected.

As part of OPEC+ and a major supplier to the European Union (EU), Russia will continue to exert the pressure it has placed on Europe in the aftermath of the Ukrainian invasion. The EU is already experiencing severe energy shortages and the stress will only worsen as a

1 E.g., Collin Eaton, Exxon CEO Warns Biden Administration Against Limiting Exports, WALL ST. J. (Updated Sept. 30, 2022).
3 Id.
4 See Ahmad Elhamy and Moaz Abd-Alaziz, Saudi Arabia, United States clash over reason for OPEC+ oil cut, REUTERS (Oct. 13, 2022).
Russian oil embargo will commence in December amidst increased demand over the winter months. Restricting European access to yet another fuel source in the face of Russian aggression jeopardizes not only the wellbeing of our allies, but also endangers our own national security.

Contrary to alleviating gasoline prices at the pump, an export ban on refined petroleum products will prompt additional price hikes and supply chain bottlenecks, costing American consumers even more money. While Democrats blame American companies for inflated prices, years of underinvestment due to regulatory uncertainty and hostile Democrat policies are causing undersupply, leading to confined refinery capacity narrowly suited to processing imported heavy crude. A ban would temporarily oversaturate domestic refineries ill-prepared to process additional levels of light sweet crude since the U.S. is currently equipped to refine principally heavy crude. The resulting global supply contraction would spike fuel prices around the world, including in the U.S. A letter sent to you by industry officials raised producers’ growing concerns regarding limits on refined petroleum products.

In addition to potentially imposing an export ban, President Biden is further depleting the Strategic Petroleum Reserve ahead of the midterm elections. Following the oil embargo OPEC levied against the U.S. in 1973, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve was created as an emergency buffer to mitigate domestic fallout from global market shocks. But after President Biden emptied more of our vital stockpiles than all previous presidents combined, the SPR now sits at its lowest levels since establishment. The SPR currently holds only enough reserves to offset U.S. consumption for 50 days should imports cease. Dipping further into the SPR to cover additional foreign fuel bans or price fluctuations is a short-sighted fix that would inadvertently exacerbate U.S. vulnerability.

To assist Republicans on the Committee on Oversight and Reform in conducting oversight of the circumstances surrounding domestic supply concerns and a potential refined

---

6 Medora Lee, Winter bills will send shivers up your spine with energy prices set to rise, analysts say, U.S.A TODAY (Sept. 16, 2022).
7 Timothy Puko and Benoît Morenne, U.S. Takes Aim at OPEC for Oil Production Cuts, WALL S. J. (Updated Oct. 6, 2022).
10 Supra, n.1.
11 Id.
13 Ben Lefebvre, Biden administration to tap oil reserve again ahead of midterms, POLITICO (Oct. 18, 2022).
15 Alexander Zemek, Biden’s America is Running on Empty, WALL S. J. (Sept. 22, 2022).
16 Id.
petroleum product ban, please provide the following information no later than November 9, 2022:

1. All documents and communications, from November 1, 2021 to present, between and among DOE officials, referring or relating to releases from the SPR in conjunction with export bans, including domestic refinery capabilities should an export ban be enforced;

2. All documents and communications, from September 1, 2022 to present, between and among DOE officials, referring to using the SPR to lower prices until November of 2022.

3. All documents and communications from January 20, 2021 to present, between third party groups outside the government and DOE employees related to releases from the SPR and/or an export ban.

4. All documents and communications, from January 20, 2021, to present, between DOE and the White House, regarding SPR releases and/or an export ban.

To ask any follow-up or related questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican Staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,

Nancy Mace
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform

Glenn S. Grothman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security

Michael Cloud
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy
cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi, Chairman Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

The Honorable Ro Khanna, Chairman Subcommittee on Environment

The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Chairman Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties