

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

December 4, 2022

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm:

Committee Republicans are continuing oversight of the Biden Administration's depletion of the United States' Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). Despite multiple requests,¹ the Department of Energy (DOE) has stonewalled efforts to investigate mismanagement and abuse of our nation's vital stockpiles and critical assets. The Biden Administration's unprecedented decision to release 180 million barrels of oil from the SPR over six months is another example of its war on domestic energy production.² The American people deserve answers about the Administration's disastrous energy policy decisions. To conduct this important oversight, we reiterate our previous requests for documents.

After the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) caused the energy crisis of 1973, the SPR was created as a buffer of last resort to prevent future, supply-based market shocks.³ The SPR had only been used in emergency situations—and only three times—before President Biden took office.⁴ However, less than two years into President Biden's first term, he has released more of our nation's emergency stockpiles than all previous presidents combined,⁵ and the SPR now sits at approximately half the levels reported the week he took office.⁶ Because the SPR was intended to bridge gaps caused by temporary disruptions, it cannot function as a permanent solution to bolster domestic supply and ease fuel prices.

¹ See e.g., Letter from James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform, et al. to Jennifer Granholm, Sec'y, Dep't of Energy (May 26, 2022); Letter from James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform, et al. to Jennifer Granholm, Sec'y, Dep't of Energy (July 20, 2022).

² *Biden orders 'unprecedented' release of oil reserves*, BBC (Mar. 31, 2022).

³ Dep't of Energy, Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response, *SPR Origins* (last visited Nov. 16, 2022).

⁴ Alexander Zemek, *Biden's America is Running on Empty*, WALL STREET JOURNAL (Sept. 22, 2022).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ See U.S. Energy Information Admin., *Weekly U.S. Stocks of Crude Oil in SPR* (last visited Nov. 16, 2022).

In the 117th Congress, we wrote you to request a briefing to ensure DOE had a plan in place to refill the supply of the SPR and to encourage domestic energy production.⁷ We also asked for a briefing and documents to understand SPR sales and evaluate how DOE chose to sell oil to a Chinese company.⁸ In another letter, we requested a briefing and documents to investigate whether SPR oil is benefiting Russia or companies assisting Russia in the invasion of Ukraine.⁹ Lastly, we sought a briefing and documents for the purpose of conducting oversight of domestic supply concerns and a potential petroleum ban in light of OPEC's intent to cut oil production and President Biden's historic depletion of the SPR.¹⁰ Since our initial inquiry into the Administration's SPR releases,¹¹ DOE has refused all requests from Committee Republicans to provide documents.¹² Instead of providing transparency vital to America's energy security and production, DOE has refused to aid Republican efforts to promote domestic production amid a worsening, global energy crisis.

No later than December 19, 2022, please provide the following previously requested documents and information for the time period covering January 20, 2021, to the present, unless otherwise noted below:

1. All documents and communications referring or relating to the sale of oil from the SPR to Unipec;
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to Hunter Biden and/or BHR Partners;
3. All documents and communications referring or relating to any analysis of the sale of oil from the SPR that could be used to create products or services sold to Russia;
4. All documents and communications referring or relating to any analysis of the sale of oil from the SPR to determine whether any oil could be reallocated from Unipec to any firms bolstering the Russian efforts to invade Ukraine;

⁷ Letter from James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform, et al. to Jennifer Granholm, Sec'y, Dep't of Energy (May 26, 2022).

⁸ Letter from James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform, et al. to Jennifer Granholm, Sec'y, Dep't of Energy (July 20, 2022).

⁹ Letter from James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform, et al. to Jennifer Granholm, Sec'y, Dep't of Energy (Sept. 1, 2022).

¹⁰ Letter from James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform, et al. to Jennifer Granholm, Sec'y, Dep't of Energy (Oct. 26, 2022).

¹¹ See Letter from James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform, et al. to Jennifer Granholm, Sec'y, Dep't of Energy (May 26, 2022).

¹² DOE has responded to Committee Republicans but has not sent requested documents. See e.g., Letter from Brad Crabtree, Assistant Sec'y, Dep't of Energy, to James Comer, Ranking Member, H. Comm. on Oversight and Reform, et al. (Aug. 17, 2022), *on file with Republican Committee staff*.

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5. All documents and communications, from November 1, 2021 to present, between and among DOE staff or officials, referring or relating to releases from the SPR in conjunction with export bans, including documents related to domestic refinery capabilities should an export ban be enforced;
6. All documents and communications, from September 1, 2022 to present, between and among DOE officials, referring to using the SPR to lower energy prices until November of 2022;
7. All documents and communications between or among third party groups outside the government and DOE employees related to releases from the SPR and/or an export ban;
8. All documents and communications between DOE employees and White House employees regarding SPR releases and/or an export ban.

To schedule the delivery of responsive documents or ask any related follow-up 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,



James Comer

Ranking Member

Committee on Oversight and Reform

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform