

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-5051
<https://oversight.house.gov>

April 4, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Granholm:

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is continuing its oversight of the Biden Administration’s depletion of the United States’ Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). The unprecedented and historic decision to release over 200 million barrels from the U.S. oil stockpile reduced SPR inventories to their lowest levels since 1984.¹ Committee Republicans are concerned the Biden Administration abused the SPR for political gain—to lower skyrocketing gas prices before the 2022 midterm election²—rather than for its intended purpose of mitigating severe energy supply interruptions or fulfilling obligations to the International Energy Agency (IEA).³ We recently held a hearing examining the Administration’s depletion of the SPR finding that, “[i]n an attempt to hide the failed results of an all-of-government war on our domestic energy industry, the Administration recklessly turned to the SPR.”⁴ By gutting vital fuel storage to lower short-term prices, the Biden Administration exposed the U.S. to future market volatility and increased supply dependence on adversarial nations instead of supporting an all-of-the-above energy approach to unleash American energy potential. We request documents and communications related to the Biden Administration’s depletion of the SPR.

During the 117th Congress, the Department of Energy (DOE) failed to provide Committee Republicans information regarding the Biden Administration’s SPR decisions on five separate

¹Briefing Materials provided by Douglas MacIntyre, Deputy Director, Office of Petroleum Reserves, Dep’t of Energy, to H. Comm. on Oversight and Accountability Staff (Mar. 10, 2022); Arathy Somasekhar, *U.S. Emergency Oil Reserves Tumble to Lowest since 1984*, REUTERS (Sept. 12, 2022).

²AAA, *Highest Recorded Average Price* (last visited Mar. 22, 2023).

³Energy Policy and Conservation Act, Pub. L. No. 94-163 (1975).

⁴*Burning the Midnight Oil: Why Depleting the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is not a Solution to America’s Energy Problem, Part 1: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Oversight and Accountability, Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs*, 118th Cong. (Mar. 8, 2023) (Statement of Chairman Pat Fallon).

occasions.⁵ On March 10, 2023, almost a year since our first inquiry,⁶ DOE finally provided its first staff-level briefing, which raised more questions about the political nature of President Biden's drawdowns of the SPR. To date, we have received no documents from DOE responsive to past Congressional inquiries.⁷ DOE only began looking into the nature of our requests a few weeks before the staff-level briefing this Congress.⁸ As a depleted SPR weakens the U.S.'s ability to respond to future supply disruptions, prompt delivery of the requested documents is vital to help Congress ensure U.S. energy security.

Therefore, we reiterate prior requests and make new requests for documents. Please provide the following documents and information, for the time period covering January 20, 2021 to the present unless otherwise noted, no later than April 18, 2023:

1. All documents and communications referring or relating to the sale of oil from the SPR to Unipet;
2. All documents and communications between and among DOE employees referring or relating to:
 - a. Lowering gas prices;
 - b. Export bans;
 - c. OPEC+ production or Saudi Arabian production;
 - d. The November 2022 elections; or
 - e. Containing the term "election," "elections," "midterm," or "midterms";
3. All documents and communications between and among DOE employees and nongovernmental groups or any third party referring or relating to:
 - a. Lowering gas prices;
 - b. Export bans;
 - c. OPEC+ production or Saudi Arabian production;
 - d. The November 2022 elections; or
 - e. Containing the term "election," "elections," "midterm," or "midterms";
4. All documents and communications between or among DOE employees with the White House referring or relating to:

⁵ Letters 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, July 20, 2022, Sept. 1, 2022, Oct. 26, 2022, and Dec. 4, 2022).

⁶ 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).

⁷ Letters 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, Sept. 1, 2022, Oct. 26, 2022, and Dec. 4, 2022).

⁸ Email Correspondence between U.S. Dep't of Energy and H. Comm. on Oversight and Accountability Majority Staff (Mar. 13, 2023).

- a. Lowering gas prices;
 - b. Export bans;
 - c. OPEC+ production or Saudi Arabian production;
 - d. The November 2022 elections; or
 - e. Containing the term “election,” “elections,” “midterm,” or “midterms”;
5. All documents and communications between or among DOE employees with the National Economic Council referring or relating to:
 - a. Lowering gas prices;
 - b. Export bans;
 - c. OPEC+ production or Saudi Arabian production;
 - d. The November 2022 elections; or
 - e. Containing the term “election,” “elections,” “midterm,” or “midterms”;
6. All documents and communications between or among DOE employees with the National Security Council referring or relating to;
 - a. Lowering gas prices;
 - b. Export bans;
 - c. OPEC+ production or Saudi Arabian production;
 - d. The November 2022 elections; or
 - e. Containing the term “election,” “elections,” “midterm,” or “midterms”;
7. All documents and communications between or among DOE employees with U.S. State Department employees referring or relating to;
 - a. Lowering gas prices;
 - b. Export bans;
 - c. OPEC+ production or Saudi Arabian production;
 - d. The November 2022 elections; or
 - e. Containing the term “election,” “elections,” “midterm,” or “midterms”;
8. All documents and communications between or among DOE employees with the IEA relating to the SPR; and
9. All documents and communications between or among DOE employees within the Office of Petroleum Reserves and the Energy Information Administration (EIA) from January 1, 2016 to the present.

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm

April 4, 2023

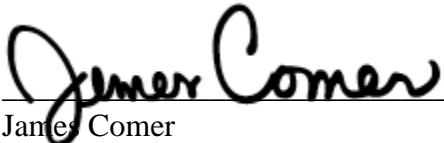
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Additionally, please make arrangements to schedule a briefing with Committee staff on our document requests as soon as possible, but no later than April 11, 2023.

To schedule the briefing, arrange for the delivery of responsive documents, or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Accountability Majority Staff at (202) 225-5074. Attached are instructions for producing the documents and information to the Committee.

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability 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

Chairman

Committee on Oversight and Accountability



Pat Fallon

Chairman

Subcommittee on Economic Growth,
Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs

cc: The Honorable Jamie B. Raskin, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

The Honorable Cori Bush, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs