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October 10, 2000

Honorable Robert Pitofsky
Chairman
Federal Trade Commission
6th and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20580

Dear Chairman Pitofsky:

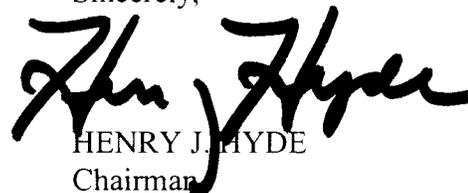
Last June, Representative Sensenbrenner and I wrote to you concerning the outrageous gasoline prices that Illinois and Wisconsin motorists, particularly those in the Chicago and Milwaukee areas, were paying. We asked the Commission to investigate whether or not illegal price gouging was occurring. I know that the Commission has been investigating, and I appreciate your efforts in that regard.

I write now to raise a similar concern. In recent weeks, I have seen a number of press reports indicating that consumers will face skyrocketing natural gas prices this winter. Some reports indicate that these increases may be as much 90%.

The press reports indicate that last year when prices were lower, producers cut their production. That production cut has led to the current shortage with corresponding higher prices. Such production cuts could be a legitimate response to market forces. On the other hand, if they were done collusively, they could violate the antitrust laws. I am making no accusations because I do not know all the relevant facts. However, I do believe the situation calls for some review. I respectfully request that the Commission investigate this issue, and as promptly as possible, report your findings and recommendations to our committee.

I appreciate your attention to this request. If you have any questions concerning this request, please contact Joseph Gibson of the Judiciary Committee staff at 202-225-3951.

Sincerely,


HENRY J. HYDE
Chairman

cc: Hon. John Conyers, Jr.
Hon. Bill Richardson