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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Resources
Washington, DC 20515

March 10, 2004

NICK J. RAHALL II, WV
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Chief of Staff

The Honorable John Ashcroft
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

The Honorable Spencer Abraham
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Attorney General Ashcroft and Secretary Abraham:

I am writing to request that you launch an immediate investigation into whether price fixing, collusion and other types of monopolistic pricing practices by gasoline suppliers is the cause for gasoline prices to be at record or near-record levels across the country.

A number of reasons are often given for these dramatic spikes in gasoline prices. Lately, they range from blaming reduced domestic refinery capacity to disruptions in the flow of crude oil. Yet, the fact of the matter is that gasoline prices almost always mysteriously increase around holidays and other peak travel seasons. The American people are not fools. There is something more behind these sudden surges in gasoline prices than the current political unrest in Venezuela, the suspension of Iraqi crude oil supply or any actions by OPEC.

As such, I respectfully request that you investigate whether wholesale gasoline suppliers are gouging consumers at the pump. If suppliers are found to have profited from illegal activities to unfairly raise prices, in my view they should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

**The Honorable John Ashcroft
The Honorable Spencer Abraham
March 10, 2004
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It would indeed be a travesty if multinational gasoline suppliers are lining their pockets with the hard earned money of American workers, especially in this time of tremendous job losses, reduced wages, and ominous economic uncertainty.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this most pressing matter.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Rahall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and "R".

**NICK J. RAHALL, II
Ranking Democratic Member**

NJR/bw