

CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS, WASHINGTON
CHAIR

FRANK PALLONE, JR., NEW JERSEY
RANKING MEMBER

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-3641

Minority (202) 225-2927

August 7, 2023

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm:

We are troubled by recent reports that you, in your official capacity as Secretary of Energy, had multiple conversations with the Chinese Communist Party's top energy official just days before the Biden administration announced it would release oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) in 2021.¹ This is concerning given the Department of Energy's (DOE) mismanagement of the SPR, which has left our country more vulnerable to energy supply disruptions and strengthened the leverage of our adversaries to use energy as a geopolitical weapon.

Today, the SPR inventory is at the lowest level since 1983.² Under President Biden and your leadership, the DOE has overseen the largest SPR drawdown in history, selling more than 260 million barrels, equivalent to approximately 42 percent of the reserve with no credible plan to replenish the stockpile. Congress authorized the reserves to be used for "severe energy supply interruption."³ The reserves are not intended to be used to combat high energy prices created by unnecessary restrictions on domestic oil and gas production. Unfortunately, this administration has done just that and, in turn, undercut the security of the United States while strengthening China.

¹ Thomas Catenacci, *Energy Sec Granholm Secretly Consulted Top CCP Energy Official Before SPR Releases*, FOX NEWS, Aug. 4, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/energy-sec-granholm-secretly-consulted-top-ccp-energy-official-spr-releases>.

² ENERGY INFO. ADMIN., *U.S. Ending Stocks in Crude Oil in SPR*, <https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=p&s=mcsstus1&f=m> (last visited Aug. 4, 2023).

³ Energy Policy and Conservation Act § 161.

This administration has been selling our SPR to China to help build their reserves at the expense of our own. Reportedly, on November 19, 2021, and November 21, 2021, you spoke with Zhang Jianhua, Chairman of China's National Energy Administration and Chinese Communist Party member. President Biden announced a release from the SPR shortly after, on November 23, 2021.⁴ Reportedly, 4 million barrels were sold to China in November of 2021.⁵ Additionally, in April 2022, the Biden administration sold a million barrels directly to a State-owned Chinese company.⁶ Millions more barrels went to overseas traders who eventually sent it to China. China now likely controls one of the world's largest stockpiles of oil, at the expense of American taxpayers and our energy security.

The Biden administration has helped support China's national security at the expense of our own security by using our strategic energy supplies to help the Chinese build up their own strategic reserves. The House of Representatives, led by the Committee on Energy and Commerce, has worked to protect against this abuse by passing H.R. 22, the *Protecting American's Strategic Petroleum Reserve from China Act* to prohibit the Biden administration from selling any products from the reserve to China, and H.R. 21, the *Strategic Production Response* to ensure the reserve is adequately available during a true emergency.

Despite these Congressional efforts to hold the Biden administration accountable for undermining our energy security, the DOE apparently is still looking to China as an example and allegedly coordinating with them prior to SPR releases. China poses one of the greatest economic, security, and geopolitical threats to the United States, while continuing to be one the world's worst polluters. As a result of this administration's war on American energy and political abuse of the SPR, Americans have become more vulnerable to true energy and national security emergencies while China has profited.

As we continue to examine the administration's mismanagement of the SPR, we seek information to understand your interactions with the Chinese government. Accordingly, and Pursuant to Rules X and XI of the U.S. House of Representatives, we request that you provide the following documents by August 21, 2023:

1. All communications, and any documents referring to or relating to those communications, between yourself and officials, employees, or representatives of the Chinese government, including the National Energy Administration, regarding the Strategic Petroleum Reserve since February 25, 2021, as well as the following information and documents:

- a. The name and job title of all officials, employees, or representatives of the Chinese government who participated in the communications.
- b. The name and job title of all United States government officials, employees, or contractors who participated in the communications.

⁴ See Catenacci, *supra* note 1.

⁵ INST. FOR ENERGY RESEARCH, *Biden Sold China SPR Oil at a Discount*, July 22, 2022, <https://www.instituteforenergyresearch.org/international-issues/biden-sold-china-spr-oil-at-a-discount/>.

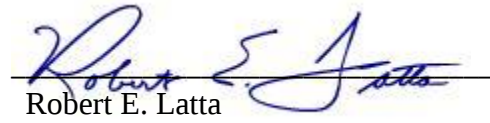
⁶ *Id.*

- c. The date of such communications.
 - d. The topics of discussion of such communications.
 - e. Any notes, summaries, memoranda, or readouts produced regarding communications.
 - f. All briefing materials, notes, or preparatory documents produced to assist in your preparation for such communications.
2. All of your calendars or meeting schedules for November 19, 2021, and November 21, 2021.
 3. All documents and communications exchanged between any Department of Energy employees or contractors and any of China's National Energy Administration officials, employees, or representatives in November 2021.
 4. All documents and communications referring or relating to scheduling a call with Director Zhang Jianhua and yourself.
 5. All documents and communications referring or relating to your November 19, 2021, and November 21, 2021, calls with Director Zhang Jianhua.
 6. Any and all briefing materials, notes, or preparatory documents produced to assist in your preparation for your November 19, 2021, and November 21, 2021, calls with Director Zhang Jianhua.
 7. The names and job titles of all Department of Energy officials, employees, or contractors participating in preparing or briefing you in preparation for your November 19, 2021, and November 21, 2021, calls with Director Zhang Jianhua.
 8. The names and job titles of everyone who participated, for any amount of time, in your November 19, 2021, and November 21, 2021, calls with Director Zhang Jianhua.
 9. All notes produced during or after your November 19, 2021, and November 21, 2021, calls with Director Zhang Jianhua, by yourself or any Department of Energy officials, employees, or contractors.
 10. All memoranda, summaries, or readouts prepared by yourself or any Department of Energy employees or contractors regarding your November 19, 2021, and November 21, 2021, calls with Director Zhang Jianhua.

Thank you for your cooperation with this matter. Should you have any questions about this request or providing a response, please contact Majority Committee staff at (202) 225-3641.


Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chair
Committee on Energy and Commerce


Michael Burgess, M.D.
Member of Congress



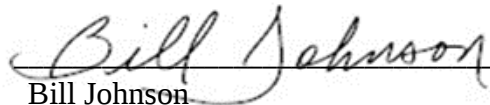
Robert E. Latta
Member of Congress



Brett Guthrie
Member of Congress



H. Morgan Griffith
Member of Congress



Bill Johnson
Member of Congress



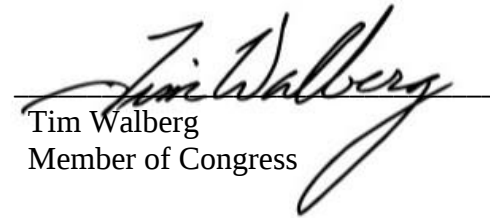
Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



Larry Bucshon, M.D.
Member of Congress



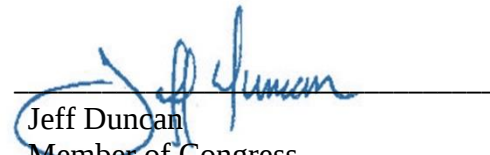
Richard Hudson
Member of Congress



Tim Walberg
Member of Congress



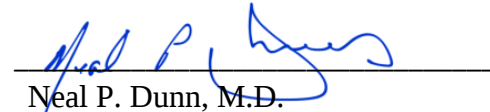
Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress



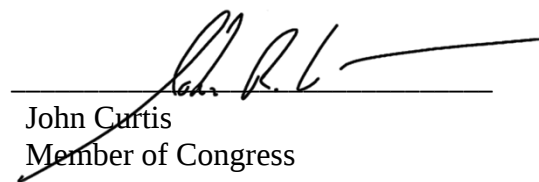
Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



Gary Palmer
Member of Congress



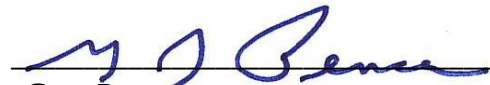
Neal P. Dunn, M.D.
Member of Congress



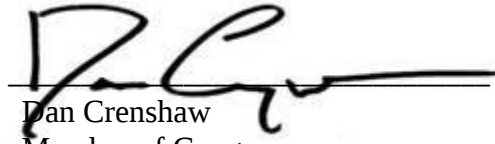
John Curtis
Member of Congress



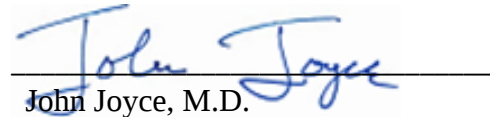
Debbie Lesko
Member of Congress



Greg Pence
Member of Congress



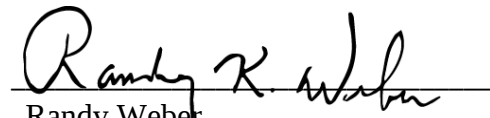
Dan Crenshaw
Member of Congress



John Joyce, M.D.
Member of Congress



Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress



Randy Weber
Member of Congress



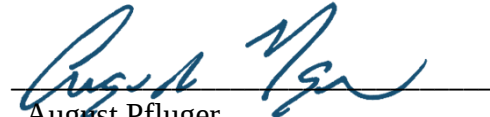
Rick W. Allen
Member of Congress



Troy Balderson
Member of Congress



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



August Pfluger
Member of Congress



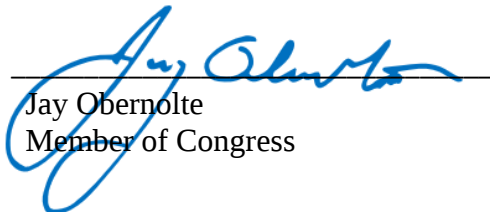
Diana Harshbarger
Member of Congress



Mariannette Miller-Meeks, M.D.
Member of Congress



Kat Cammack
Member of Congress



Jay Obernolte
Member of Congress