United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6150

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May 20, 2013

The Honorable Ernest Moniz
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave. SW
Washington DC 20585

Dear Secretary Moniz:

We write to express our concerns over the recent spikes in gasoline prices, most recently in the Midwestern region of the country, and earlier this year on the West Coast. These increases have been attributed by the Energy Information Administration (EIA) and other analysts to the impact of planned refinery outages in these regions and are causing motorists in these regions to pay some of the highest gas prices in the nation. We are writing to urge you to take action to remedy this situation by restoring EIA's program to track planned refinery outages.

As you know, Congress anticipated this very situation in 2007, and took steps to prevent it. Section 804 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-140) authorized the EIA to collect data and to report on the market impact of planned refinery outages. The intended purpose of this reporting was to help avoid shutting down multiple refining facilities in the same region at the same time which EIA has itself considered a primary cause of the recent spikes in gas prices.[1] Unfortunately, the EIA suspended its analysis and reporting on the market impacts of planned refinery outages in 2011, citing a reduction in funding.

Given the importance of this situation to motorists, we urge that you carry out the intent of Congress by re-starting the EIA analysis and reporting of planned refinery outages. In addition, we also request that you provide our offices with your recommendations on additional steps that could be taken by Congress to improve EIA's monitoring of refinery outages and prevent this situation from recurring in the future.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Al Franken
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy

Ron Wyden
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Cc: The Honorable Adam Sieminski, Administrator, U.S. Energy Information Administration

[1] EIA, *This Week In Petroleum*, "Gasoline prices have risen since the start of the year," February 21, 2003.