

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2802

March 11, 2011

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings and Chairman Upton,

I am writing to urge immediate development of legislation that will increase domestic energy production and refining capacity. As you know, gas prices have been increasing dramatically over the past weeks, owing largely to the turmoil in the Middle East and fears that oil production and availability will be impacted as a result. The average price of a gallon of gasoline has increased to \$3.54 today in the United States and \$3.64 in Nevada—and we are still months away from the annual price spikes that occur as we head into the spring and summer months. As the price of fuel increases, so do the price of essential items such as food and energy, as well as many other goods and services. In these difficult economic times, increased fuel prices will further devastate families, senior citizens, and small businesses already struggling to make ends meet. Put simply, Americans cannot afford another huge hit to their pocketbooks.

In Nevada, the unemployment rate is the highest in the nation at 14.2%. While this number is lower than the previous month, experts believe that this is due to individuals dropping out of the workforce all together as opposed to job growth. This level of despondency and lack of opportunity will be exacerbated by spiking fuel prices. Additionally, Nevada has a large rural population, which means that many of my constituents have to drive greater distances for goods and services than their urban counterparts. Many of my constituents are involved in the livestock and agriculture industry. Increased fuel prices will jeopardizes their livelihoods and the sustainability of the communities that center around them.

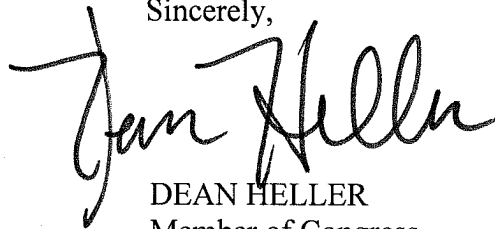
As Members of Congress, our solution to this issue should be one that respects the main cause of the problem – supply and demand. A greater supply is needed, and to that end domestic exploration and production need to be increased. Additional refining capacity is also needed to refine more oil into gasoline. This part of the system is currently experiencing a “bottleneck” because demand far exceeds refining capacity. A new refinery has not been built in our country in more than 30 years, and any problem, fire, or natural disaster that affects refineries dramatically affects prices.

I am proud to say that Nevada is one of the leading states that both supports renewable energy policy and has the ability to provide for those needs. We are fortunate to have abundant opportunity for not only solar but wind power and also geothermal power. I am also a staunch supporter of the need to adopt responsible measures to increase energy efficiency, encourage alternative fuels, and diversify the source of our fuels to increase price stability. That being said, currently there is no reliable and affordable way to replace petroleum for transportation fuel. While we work diligently to develop alternatives, we need to be cognizant of the need to provide for the immediate future.

Developing our domestic resources will not only bring down the cost of fuel and goods and services to our citizens, it will provide jobs that are desperately needed in these difficult economic times. To that end, I respectfully request that the development and consideration of legislation to increase domestic production and refining capacity be the highest priority of your respective Committees in an effort to bring legislation to the Floor as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dean Heller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "D" and "H".

DEAN HELLER
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable John Boehner, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Eric Cantor, Majority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Majority Whip, U.S. House of Representatives