

# United States Senate

March 11, 2026

Secretary Chris Wright  
Secretary of Energy  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue Southwest  
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Secretary Wright,

I write to express my concerns about the Biden administration's actions related to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) and its consequences for the U.S. government's ability to respond to the illegal attacks by the Iranian regime in the Middle East.

The Biden administration released 180 million barrels from the SPR between April and October 2022 to suppress gas prices ahead of the midterm elections. That decision drained the reserve to a 40-year low. The decision to drain the SPR was not a response to a supply emergency; it was a deliberate political act designed to protect Democrats from the consequences of their own failed energy policies.

This wasn't the first time Democrats undermined the reserve. In 2020, they blocked the Trump administration's effort to invest \$3 billion in domestic petroleum for the SPR, calling it a "bailout" for the oil industry. Then, in January 2021, President Biden signed Executive Order 14008, which imposed a moratorium on new oil and gas leases on federal lands and offshore waters. This executive order constrained domestic production while the administration was draining the reserve.

The Strait of Hormuz is the world's most important oil transit chokepoint, with roughly 20 percent of the global petroleum liquids consumption moving through it in recent years. That is precisely why the SPR must be treated as a strategic national security asset, not a political tool.

I commend President Trump's commitment to replenish the SPR and reestablish the principle that America's emergency stockpile is an instrument designed to protect our national security. To better understand how Biden's actions have impacted the SPR, I respectfully request answers to the following questions:

1. What would an investment of \$3 billion in domestic petroleum for the SPR today provide compared to \$3 billion in 2020? How would that investment in 2020 have impacted SPR levels today?
2. What effect did the Biden administration's Executive Order 14008 have on domestic oil and gas supplies in 2021 and 2022? What impact did this have on overall domestic supplies that could be used to replenish the reserve?

I look forward to continuing our work together on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Tom Cotton  
United States Senator