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SCHAKOWSKY CALLS ON CHENEY TO BRING NEW ENERGY TASK FORCE BEFORE CONGRESS

IN LETTER, ASKS VICE PRESIDENT TO REVERSE COURSE AND TAKE ACTION TO BRING DOWN GASOLINE PRICES

WASHINGTON, DC -- U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, today sent the following letter to Vice President Cheney calling on him to bring together a reconstituted Energy Task Force to bring down gasoline prices. The Energy Information Administration predicted that this summer's gasoline prices would be on average 25 cents higher than the record summer prices of 2005.

The full text of the letter to the Vice President is below:

Dear Vice President Cheney:

This week, the Energy Information Administration released its short term energy outlook which predicted that the average price of gasoline would rise 10.5%, or 25 cents, this summer. Some experts predict even greater increases. Rising energy prices are one of the most significant economic crises facing low and middle income families and businesses across the United States.

Gasoline prices have steadily increased since you and President Bush assumed the presidency. In January 2001, the average price of a gallon of gasoline was half of what it is today. Meanwhile, your Administration and your allies in Congress have yet to take action to bring relief to the American people. Last year, Congress passed two bills, supported by your Administration, which provided billions of dollars in tax breaks and subsidies to the same oil and gas companies that were making record profits.

Before the Energy Policy Act passed last year, the EIA projected that the legislation would have a negligible impact on energy prices overall and may actually raise gasoline prices at the pump. Those projections turned out to be true. Now, the EIA has projected another increase in gasoline prices and we must take action as soon as possible to

prevent this rise.

Vice President Cheney, I believe it is time for you to call together a reconstituted Energy Task Force that comes before Congress and helps prepare immediate plans to bring gasoline prices down. This time, the members of the Energy Task Force should work with Congress to conduct a transparent policymaking process that gives all stakeholders a seat at the table, including representatives from the oil and gas and the auto industry, consumer and environmental organizations, scientists, and farmers. The task force should draft immediate plans to bring prices down.

A wide range of policy prescriptions to bring gasoline prices down in the short-term and to hold them down in the long-term should be included in this discussion, including:

Giving the federal government new legal authority to hold individual oil and gas companies accountable for price gouging

A federal tax on windfall profits earned by engaging in price gouging

Temporary price caps on domestic oil

Expediting the spread of fueling stations which carry E85 throughout the country

Providing incentives for American automobile manufacturers to more quickly produce and bring to

market hybrid and dual-fuel capable vehicles

This year, no significant supply shock is to blame for the rise in the price of gasoline. Our domestic refineries are expected to fully recover from last year's hurricanes by mid-summer. Certainly, the rising price of oil on the international market has some effect on the price of gasoline in the United States, but 40% of oil consumed in the U.S. is still produced domestically. Your Administration has the power to determine whether gasoline prices will remain affordable this summer or whether consumers will again suffer at the pump.

The summer driving season is only weeks away. I hope that the urgency of the projected rise in gasoline prices over last summer's record levels will lead you to work with Congress and all stakeholders - not just the original and still undisclosed members of your Task Force -- to put a stop to this. As a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, I look forward to working with your Administration on real energy solutions that will hold prices at the pump down for consumers.