

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 11, 2012

The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20585

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Jon Leibowitz
Chairman
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20580

Dear Secretary Chu, Secretary Salazar, and Chairman Leibowitz,

As I'm sure you are aware, gas prices recently skyrocketed on the West Coast, which caused gas prices to rise in Nevada as well. These increases appear to be due to myriad factors, including refinery disruptions and concerns about supply.

Such price volatility is troubling for the state of Nevada. Middle class families across the state have already been forced to tighten their belts, and the last thing they need is to feel the squeeze of higher gas prices. We need to make sure that businesses, from producers to retailers, are not manipulating prices. I respectfully request that your agencies take appropriate steps to prevent illegal market manipulation. We must ensure an affordable, stable supply of the energy needed to power our economy.

Recent price volatility also provides an opportunity to reflect on the impact of high energy prices on consumers. Gas prices have more than doubled since 2009. These high costs permeate into every aspect of life and disproportionately hurt Nevada's tourism industry and the jobs that depend on it. Higher gas prices mean empty restaurants, vacant hotel rooms, and crippled small businesses at a time when we can least afford it.

I support commonsense measures that will help our nation move toward alternative energy technologies to power our future. We also need to secure our economy now by encouraging responsible production of all of our natural resources. Democrats and Republicans must work together to develop concrete policies that will result in lower prices, expanded domestic production, and a reduction in our dependence on foreign oil.

Expanding production, improving our energy infrastructure, and continuing to develop alternative fuel technologies are the right objectives to meet our nation's energy needs.

We also must do what is right for Nevadans and all Americans by securing stable, affordable gas prices. This includes protecting consumers from illegal practices and securing the energy resources needed to power our economy. I look forward to working with each of you to achieve these vital goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dean Heller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dean" and the last name "Heller" clearly distinguishable.

DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator