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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 22, 2002

The Honorable David Walker
Comptroller General
General Accounting Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

At the request of Representatives Dingell and Waxman, the General Accounting Office has been investigating the makeup and deliberations of the Administration's energy task force. Those efforts were set aside after the tragedies of September 11. We write you today to urge you to continue this investigation.

The tragedies of September 11 forced Congress and the Administration to focus their attention on combating terrorism. However, now as the war continues to go well and we turn to domestic issues, Americans have the right to know how the Administration's energy policy was developed. Soon, Congress will begin to consider legislation that will establish a national energy policy, but we still have very little information about the makeup and conduct of the Vice President's task force, even though it was established and run by the executive branch of government and was, by all accounts, the basis for the President's energy plan.

Who helped shape the Administration's energy policy? How did participants get invited and what interests did they represent? What did they recommend? What changes did they request? The American public deserves answers to these questions.

Our concern is that we would be setting a dangerous precedent, and would be shirking Congress's oversight responsibilities if these questions are not asked, or if the Administration is allowed to avoid answering them. As the investigative arm of Congress, we believe it is the responsibility of the GAO to look into this situation.

*Dingell
Waxman
Echberger*

Sincerely,

J. H. A.

News From U.S. Senator**North Dakota**

Byron L. Dorgan

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday

January 23, 2002

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KEY SENATORS ASK GAO TO PURSUE ADMINISTRATION'S ENERGY TASK FORCE INFORMATION

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) --- Four key U. S. Senators, in a letter sent today to the General Accounting Office (GAO), asked that it continue to seek information about the makeup and deliberations of the Bush Administration's energy task force.

The request was originally made by Reps. John Dingell (D-MI) and Henry Waxman (D-CA) prior to U.S. House consideration of the Energy Bill. Renewing the request today, are Senators Ernest "Fritz" Hollings (D-SC), Byron Dorgan (D-ND), Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) and Carl Levin (D-MI).

The House has completed its work on the energy bill, but the Senate has yet to take it up. The four Senators, who chair the Commerce Committee and the Government Affairs Committee, and their relevant subcommittees, are requesting that the GAO continue to seek the information which they say the Senate needs, before the Senate begins its consideration of the energy bill.

Prior to September 11th terrorist attacks, the GAO announced that the Administration was withholding the information. The GAO, which is Congress's investigative arm, responded that it had a right to the information and that it was prepared to go to court to enforce a requirement that the Administration turn over information.

The four Senators said they feel the Senate deserves the information prior to its consideration of the energy bill. That view has been supported by Republican Senator Fred Thompson (R-TN) who has publicly said the Administration should release the information as well.

The text of the letter, to David Walker, Comptroller General of the GAO, follows:

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END