

Congress of the United States

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For more information, contact:
Karen Lightfoot (Rep. Waxman): (202) 225-5051
Sari Levy (Sen. Lieberman): (202) 224-6848
Barry Piatt (Sen. Dorgan): (202) 224-1191

Final GAO Report on Cheney Energy Task Force Released

Reps. Henry A. Waxman and John D. Dingell and Sens. Joseph I. Lieberman, Ernest F. Hollings, Carl Levin, and Byron L. Dorgan today released GAO's final report on the operations of Vice President Cheney's Energy Task Force.

The GAO report details the refusal of the White House to provide GAO even basic information about the operations of the task force. As a consequence, GAO was unable to fulfill the members' request to identify the outside parties that met with the task force. GAO also could not describe the extent to which powerful energy industry interests may have influenced the recommendations to the President.

GAO concludes: "The extent to which submissions from any of [the] stakeholders were solicited, influenced policy deliberations, or were incorporated into the final report cannot be determined based on the limited information made available to GAO.... The Office of the Vice President's unwillingness to provide the NEPDG records or other related information precluded GAO from fully achieving its objectives and substantially limited GAO's ability to comprehensively analyze the NEPDG process."

"The Bush Administration is obsessed with secrecy. This is profoundly unhealthy to our democracy," said Rep. Waxman. "The result is not just bad decisions on energy, but a rejection of the principles of open government and public accountability."

Rep. Dingell commented, "The GAO should have been allowed to conduct a thorough investigation in an open and fair fashion. This report is a sad chronicle of the efforts of the Office of Vice President to hide its activities from the American people. Whether it was embarrassment over the number of meetings with campaign contributors, or a misguided policy of secrecy, we do not know. But we should not be surprised that the energy plan was so weighted on behalf of those who had special access."

"The American people deserve to know what role the energy companies and other special interests played in the development of the National Energy Policy," Sen. Lieberman said. "But as this report by GAO demonstrates, they will never know the full truth because the White House chose to stonewall instead of cooperate with investigators."

Sen. Byron Dorgan said, "The best government is an open government in which the American people are able to see what policy makers are doing and have the

opportunity to participate in their decision making. Clearly, the operation of this task force, and the administration's response – or lack of response -- to the GAO's inquiries, flies in the face of good government.”

For additional background, including a detailed chronology of GAO's efforts to obtain task force records and the White House's efforts to frustrate GAO, see: www.house.gov/reform/min/inves_energy/energy_cheney.htm.