



**Opening Statement of Chairman Sam Graves  
Committee on Small Business  
“Running on Empty: The Effects of High Gasoline Prices on Small Businesses”  
May 9, 2012**

Good Afternoon everyone and thank you for joining us. The hearing will now come to order.

I want to thank the witnesses for appearing today and for agreeing to testify on an issue that just won't seem to go away: high fuel prices. Few things have such broad effects on consumers, the economy and small businesses as high fuel prices.

The price of gasoline often determines where and when consumers will shop, what it costs a small business to deliver products and services and the cost of purchasing materials and other inputs necessary for business operations.

When consumers have less money to spend, and small businesses are forced to shift resources to fuel purchases or pay higher prices for inputs, weak economic growth is often the result.

Last Friday, the Department of Labor reported that the unemployment rate remains above eight percent and the economy created far fewer jobs than estimated. This figure doesn't even count the millions of long-term unemployed Americans who have given up trying to find work, and are thus not included in official statistics, nor does it account for the millions of underemployed Americans.

While there are many factors to explain weak economic and job growth, high fuel prices are a contributing factor.

Given the importance of energy prices to the health of small businesses and the economy, this committee has taken particular interest in the effects of high fuel prices on small businesses and the the role they can play in helping solve the problem of high energy prices, create jobs, and enhance our nation's energy security.

This hearing continues that trend. We are fortunate to have with us today a panel of witnesses who can provide the Committee with important insight into the causes of high fuel prices and how they affect businesses.

I know yield to Ranking Member Velazquez for her opening statement.