

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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**Ranking Member Cori Bush**

**Opening Statement**

**“Burning the Midnight Oil: Why Depleting the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is Not a Solution to America’s Energy Problem, Part I”**

**March 8, 2023**

St. Louis and I are here today to have a serious discussion about what energy security looks like for people – not corporations. This hearing is not that discussion. If House Republicans actually cared about preventing an energy and economic crisis from happening, they would commit to investing in renewable energy. Unfortunately, there are no serious proposals being offered.

Rising inflation caused by Russia’s violent invasion of Ukraine and Covid-19 pandemic-related supply chain shortages, combined with dangerous corporate greed and a reliance on fossil fuels, has left the United States in a tenuous position of expensive, unreliable, and unsafe energy.

**Let’s be clear: the Strategic Petroleum Reserve was precisely created to be tapped in emergencies involving severe shortages of oil. Of course, I believe that the best way to avoid similar challenges in the future is to end our reliance on oil, but there should be no doubt that President Biden employed it explicitly for its stated purpose in an emergency — when our nation’s families and people needed it most.**

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), gas prices peaked at \$4.88 in the Midwest region last year and are now down to \$3.24 as of this week. People were struggling to get to doctor’s appointments or keep their heat on and the Republican party would have loved to do nothing.

While the drawdown of the SPR was necessary to bolster supplies in an emergency, future events can be best ameliorated or prevented by reducing our demand for and reliance on dangerous fossil fuels.

**But my Republican colleagues have unironically invited for-profit think tanks and oil titans whose expertise is in maximizing profits, especially at the expense of our Black, brown, and Indigenous neighbors’ health, safety, and well-being.**

**One of these so-called energy “experts” is a philosopher who has previously espoused white supremacist views. For instance, in his 2000 college newspaper, he wrote “The African and African American studies department has 23 classes. In many of these classes, African culture is presented, not as inferior to Western culture, but as on equal footing with it. In other departments, the same is done with Latin American, Indian, and American Indian culture.”**

When confronted about these views over two decades later, rather than disavow them, he doubled down on this narrative, saying “It has nothing to do with skin color, I was arguing that those cultures overall are inferior to Western culture.”

**We are not inferior to those cultures. This is the witness the Republicans invited to discuss issues of energy security. He came here to promote fossil fuels, which we know are disproportionately harming and killing Black and brown people.**

**Last week, I joined Ranking Member Raskin and all of my Democratic Oversight colleagues in calling on Oversight Republicans to denounce white nationalism and white supremacy in all its forms. Not one single Republican joined us.**

**So I ask again today, will my Republican colleagues condemn white supremacy and work with us to ensure this committee engages in advancing good and reducing harm rather than perpetuating it?**

Our Committee needs to be focused on actions that will help people and prevent financial hurt and pain. Whether we deploy the SPR or we don't, the instability of our energy system will continue if we are reliant on oil. Our communities need safe, reliable, renewable energy and more investments in public transit. Thank you and I yield back.

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