Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 22, 2006

The Honorable Samuel W. Bodman, Secretary
United States Department of Energy
Forrestal Building
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20585-1000

RE: **Comments on *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Site Selection for the Expansion of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve*, May 2006, DOE/EID-0385**

Dear Secretary Bodman:

First, we would like to thank you for all that you and the employees of the U.S. Department of Energy ("DOE") have done in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. We sincerely appreciate your leadership and the hard work and perseverance exhibited by the employees at DOE as the State of Mississippi recovers from this devastating catastrophe. We look forward to continuing our work together.

We are writing today to submit our comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("Draft EIS") that DOE recently filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on Friday, May 19, 2006. As you know, Section 301 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 ("EPACT"), Public Law No. 109-58, required the Secretary to fill the SPR to one billion barrels as "expeditiously as practicable." To accomplish this task, Section 302 of EPACT also required the DOE to complete a proceeding by August 8, 2006, to select additional sites to expand the SPR to the authorized level. While the recently-filed Draft EIS sets forth a number of options to accomplish this capacity expansion of the SPR, including the possible construction of five potential new sites and/or the expansion of three existing sites, we believe that the two sites under consideration in Bruinsburg and Richton, Mississippi, respectively, are two of the best values for the federal government in terms of cost, efficiency, and security, and one or both should ultimately be selected in any expansion of the SPR.

First, these sites are located significantly further inland than other sites being considered, and substantially further away from the vulnerable coastline, the selection of which would effectively diversify our currently homogenously and centrally-located SPR. The devastating catastrophes last year in the forms of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita should have taught us the importance of locating our emergency stockpiles of petroleum in alternative, diverse locations throughout the Gulf Coast region. The current vulnerability of the SPR from potential future hazards, whether natural disasters because of the proximity of SPR facilities to the coastline or even terrorist acts because of the closely clustered locations of SPR facilities, is unacceptable. Correcting this potential liability, however, can begin by selecting an expansion site for SPR at Bruinsburg or Richton, thus alleviating to a substantial degree this continuing potential for hazards to the SPR. With the recent predictions of stronger hurricanes with increased frequency, it is imperative that DOE choose a site that is more inland and better insulated from such

disasters. By not choosing an inland site such as Bruinsburg or Richton, we are perpetuating the vulnerability of the SPR to such disasters, including potentially devastating damage and possible closure of SPR facilities in emergency situations when the SPR is needed most.

Second, the geography, geology and topography presented by these two new sites at Bruinsburg and Richton are superior to other new sites being considered. These sites are located in the highlands, avoiding environmental and economic problems associated with constructing or expanding in expansive coastal wetlands or sensitive areas. This will not only be much more cost-effective to the federal government, but will also be more environmentally sound for future generations. Further, the geologic structure of the potential domes is better suited for SPR expansion, resulting in lower cost cavern construction, cavern integrity and easier petroleum distribution. These sites also can be completely under DOE control, maximizing security at what will be one of the nation's most important energy installations.

Finally, these sites also have numerous other attributes that make their selection optimal. For instance, the Bruinsburg site is strategically located on the Mississippi River and only a short distance from a major pipeline – the Capline system. This strategic location along the river gives the site many advantages, through an abundance of resources in raw water intake as well as opportunities for lower costs in construction and distribution of petroleum through the use of marine transportation. Further, easy and efficient access to the Capline system gives the Bruinsburg site a major resource for distribution. With both marine and pipeline alternatives of distribution, the Bruinsburg site has maximum flexibility to use this strategic energy resource and provide the most economic and functional security for the SPR, ensuring the continued access and availability of SPR resources to the rest of the country when SPR facilities located on or near the coast are closed due to natural disasters. The Richton site also has many beneficial characteristics, including a distribution alternative at a new location along the Gulf Coast away from current SPR locations which contributes to the diversification of SPR locations generally; its utilization of the Calpine pipeline at a point less vulnerable than coastal alternatives; and its proposed raw water intake which would not cause upstream migration of salinity gradient as it would in some other alternative sites being considered.

Mr. Secretary, we firmly believe the sites being considered in Mississippi are the most strategically-located sites and the best value for the federal government, and strongly urge the selection of one of these sites in any expansion of the SPR. Thank you again for your generosity and assistance as the State of Mississippi recovers. We look forward to working with you on this and additional projects as we continue to move forward in rebuilding the Gulf Coast and the State of Mississippi.

Sincerely,

Senator Thad Cochran

Senator Trent Lott