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Rep. John D. Dingell and Rep. Henry A. Waxman Statement Regarding GAO's Issuance of a Demand Letter

Representatives John D. Dingell and Henry A. Waxman, Ranking Members of the Committees on Energy and Commerce and Government Reform respectively, today expressed surprise and disappointment with the Bush Administration's continued intransigence and refusal to cooperate with the General Accounting Office (GAO).

Today, GAO issued a formal demand letter to the Vice President in order to "demand full and complete access . . . to records relating to the development of the Administration's National Energy Policy." According to the GAO letter, "our request for access to records necessary to do our work has been denied." This is the first demand letter ever issued by the GAO to the Vice President of the United States.

"Regrettably, the Vice President's office has continued on its course of secrecy and obstinance and has forced the GAO to issue a letter of demand," said Rep. Dingell. "The GAO, at our request, has asked simple questions which require simple, yet truthful, answers. I again ask the Vice President to break the silence and to order his office to immediately and fully cooperate with the GAO to avoid a very unfortunate confrontation."

"The White House should simply try telling the truth on the Task Force's activities and stop hiding information that Congress and the public have a right to see," said Rep. Waxman. "The Vice President should tell his office to end this arrogant and unnecessary confrontation with GAO and accept the fact that he and the President are accountable to the Congress and the American people."

Under the law, the Administration has 20 days to respond to a demand letter. If the Administration fails to respond, the Comptroller General may bring a civil action to compel the agency to respond.

On April 19, 2001, Congressmen Dingell and Waxman launched joint requests concerning the Energy Task Force, its members, and its proceedings to both the Vice President and GAO. To date, the Office of the Vice President has failed to respond adequately to the Congressmen's inquiries and has been combative with GAO.