

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

November 22, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

I am writing to share my serious concerns over the growing supply chain crisis across the country and around the world, and to ask that you appoint a Supply Chain Czar to coordinate a federal response these issues.

As we approach Thanksgiving and continue our recovery from the pandemic, Americans have so much to be thankful for this year, but supply chain disruptions, shortages, and increased prices loom large over too many families sitting at dining room tables. And with the holidays around the corner, my constituents are concerned about whether they will be able to purchase gifts that arrive in time for Christmas. More must be done to address this crisis at all levels of government.

As America's economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, disruptions to supply chains and labor shortages in key sectors have resulted in delays delivering essential goods and price increases across the economy. While I am encouraged that the recently passed *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* includes provisions to ease bottlenecks at ports, bolster our trucking workforce, and generally invest in infrastructure essential to the movement of goods domestically, my constituents need immediate action to ease daily price shocks. As such, I urge you to appoint a Supply Chain Czar responsible for coordinating a federal response to supply chain disruptions across all relevant agencies, working with state and local governments to address bottlenecks wherever they occur, and finding ways to bolster American manufacturing and supply chain resilience at home.

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented changes to U.S. consumer behavior, placing strain on our supply chains and aging infrastructure. In 2020 alone, U.S. e-commerce sales grew more than 30 percent from 2019 and accounted for 14 percent of all U.S. sales.¹ The surge in demand for durable goods occurred as global shutdowns shuttered factories, resulting in shortages and the backlog of goods at U.S. ports and railyards. Currently, 77 percent of the world's ports are experiencing unusually long turnaround times, and ports across the U.S. are experiencing record wait times for incoming ships. Last week, U.S. ports in Los Angeles and Long Beach had a combined congestion rate of 56 percent, and the Port of Savannah reported an 81% congestion rate.²

U.S. supply chains are also struggling with a shortage of workers in the trucking industry. According to a recent report from the American Trucking Association, the United States currently has a truck driver shortage of about 80,000 drivers — a 30 percent increase from the pre-pandemic shortage of drivers. If

¹ <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/02/19/e-commerce-surged-during-covid-groceries-sporting-goods-top-gainers-.html>

² <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-10-17/port-gridlock-stretches-supply-lines-thin-in-blow-for-economies>

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this trend continues, the shortage is expected to grow to as much as 160,000 by 2030.³ This persistent driver shortage has further compounded the backlog at ports and railyards as there are insufficient drivers to transport the offloaded goods nationwide.

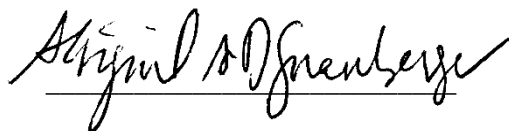
My constituents are also deeply concerned about how supply chain disruptions have resulted in increased prices for goods. According to a report from the U.S. Department of Labor released last week, the consumer price index, which measures prices across a basket of representative goods and services, rose by 6.2 percent since this time last year. This rise marks the most significant increase in prices since December 1990.⁴

According to the same report, fuel prices have soared 12.3 percent over the last month, up 59.1 percent from the previous year.⁵ Increased fuel costs are especially devastating for my rural constituents, who more often have long commutes to and from work. Similarly, energy costs for home heating and electricity are quickly increasing. As we approach the winter months, I am concerned that surges in the prices for natural gas, electricity, and home heating oil may force some families to choose between heat and other essentials such as medicine, food, and other utilities.

My constituents also face increased costs at the grocery store. In 2020, many districts saw record lines of cars outside our community food banks. While this situation has drastically improved over the last year thanks to COVID relief efforts and a recovering economy, I am deeply concerned that increased food costs could harm those families that are just beginning to recover from the pandemic. Food prices in September 2021 increased by nearly as much as they did during all of 2019, driven by surging costs for meat and poultry.⁶ With the Thanksgiving holiday right around the corner, the U.S. Farm Bureau Federation reports that the price for a family of ten's Thanksgiving meal has increased to \$53 this year, up \$6 from 2020.⁷

I appreciate your attention to this serious matter, and I look forward to working with your administration and a newly appointed Supply Chain Czar to address these issues and set our economy and our constituents on a path towards long-term economic prosperity.

Respectfully,



Abigail D. Spanberger

Member of Congress

³ <https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/19/economy/trucking-short-drivers/index.html>

⁴ <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/10/consumer-price-index-october.html>

⁵ <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/11/10/consumer-price-index-october.html>

⁶ <https://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Article/2021/10/26/Food-prices-continue-to-climb-twice-as-fast-as-all-items-in-September-bringing-YOY-increase-to-4.6#>

⁷ <https://www.fb.org/newsroom/farm-bureau-survey-shows-thanksgiving-dinner-cost-up-14>