



Highlights of [GAO-03-894](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

On January 29, 2001, the President established the National Energy Policy Development Group (NEPDG)—a group of cabinet-level and other senior administration officials, chaired by the Vice President—to gather information, deliberate, and recommend a national energy policy. The group presented its final report to the President in May 2001. GAO was asked to (1) describe the process used by the NEPDG to develop the *National Energy Policy* report, including whom the group met with and what topics were discussed and (2) determine the costs associated with that process.

Although appointed NEPDG Chair, the Vice President elected not to respond to GAO's request for certain factual NEPDG information. Accordingly, as authorized by GAO's access-to-records statute, and after exhausting efforts to achieve a resolution and following the processes specified in that statute, GAO filed suit in U.S. District Court to obtain the information. The district court later dismissed GAO's suit on jurisdictional grounds, without reaching the merits of GAO's right to audit and evaluate NEPDG activities or to obtain access to NEPDG records. For a variety of reasons, GAO decided not to appeal the district court decision.

DOE, Interior, and EPA reviewed the draft report and chose not to comment. OVP declined an offer to review the draft and comment.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-894.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Robert A. Robinson at (202) 512-3841 or robinsonr@gao.gov.

ENERGY TASK FORCE

Process Used to Develop the *National Energy Policy*

What GAO Found

According to the best information that GAO could obtain, the *National Energy Policy* report was the product of a centralized, top-down, short-term, and labor-intensive process that involved the efforts of several hundred federal employees governmentwide. In the 3 ½ months between the inception of NEPDG and its presentation of the final report, the Principals (the Vice President, selected cabinet-level and other senior administration officials) and their support staff (Support Group) controlled most facets of the report's development, including setting meeting schedules and agendas, controlling the workflow, distributing work assignments, rewriting chapters, and approving recommendations. Senior agency officials served on a select interagency Working Group, while the majority of agency staff working on the NEPDG effort played a tributary role, helping their agencies fulfill their NEPDG-related obligations and responding to the Support Group's subsequent requests for information, review, or comment.

In developing the *National Energy Policy* report, the NEPDG Principals, Support Group, and participating agency officials and staff met with, solicited input from, or received information and advice from nonfederal energy stakeholders, principally petroleum, coal, nuclear, natural gas, and electricity industry representatives and lobbyists. The extent to which submissions from any of these stakeholders were solicited, influenced policy deliberations, or were incorporated into the final report cannot be determined based on the limited information made available to GAO. NEPDG met and conducted its work in two distinct phases: the first phase culminated in a March 19, 2001, briefing to the President on challenges relating to energy supply and the resulting economic impact; the second phase ended with the May 16, 2001, presentation of the final report to the President. The Office of the Vice President's (OVP) unwillingness to provide the NEPDG records or other related information precluded GAO from fully achieving its objectives and substantially limited GAO's ability to comprehensively analyze the NEPDG process.

None of the key federal entities involved in the NEPDG effort provided GAO with a complete accounting of the costs that they incurred during the development of the *National Energy Policy* report. The two federal entities responsible for funding the NEPDG effort—OVP and the Department of Energy (DOE)—did not provide the comprehensive cost information that GAO requested. OVP provided GAO with 77 pages of information, two-thirds of which contained no cost information while the remaining one-third contained some miscellaneous information of little to no usefulness. OVP stated that it would not provide any additional information. DOE, the Department of the Interior, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provided GAO with estimates of certain costs and salaries associated with the NEPDG effort, but these estimates, all calculated in different ways, were not comprehensive.