

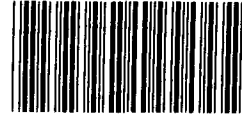


COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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The Honorable Harley O. Staggers
Chairman, Committee on Interstate
and Foreign Commerce H560 2300
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Subject: [Comments on House bill H.R. 5019,
96th Congress] (EMD-80-B1)

The following comments on H.R. 5019 are provided for your consideration. As you know, section 501 of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act would be amended by redesignating subsection (c) as subsection (d) and by inserting after subsection (b) a new subsection to require that the Comptroller General establish a program to determine and reconcile any differences in the data on the volumes of imported petroleum products which is collected and published by the Energy Information Administration and the data which is collected by the United States Customs Service and published by the Bureau of the Census. Each calendar quarter, the Comptroller General would also be required to

DIG 00489
ABC 00136
ABC 00204

"* * * prepare and transmit to the Congress a report setting forth any differences in petroleum product import data identified under such program together with explanation of such differences."

We believe there are two principal reasons why this provision should be eliminated. One, that if enacted this quarterly requirement would draw heavily on our already limited staff resources, disrupt our audit plans, and possibly preclude our undertaking other important work. In fact, such requirements might preclude us from timely performing work specifically requested by your committee or other congressional committees because the available staff necessarily would be involved in reconciling any differences in reported volumes of imported petroleum products and preparing a quarterly report as proposed by H.R. 5019.

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The other principal reason is that the requirement for reconciliations of data and reports to the Congress every 4 months is unnecessarily restrictive. This requirement would result in almost continuous audits of imported petroleum products. We believe that less frequent audits would provide us with an adequate basis for reporting on the accuracy of imported petroleum products data.

We also believe that section 2 (a) of H.R. 5019, which requires that the Commissioner of Customs establish and implement a program for the collection and verification of data on the total volumes of all petroleum products imported into the United States, should be eliminated.

The principal reason why this provision should be eliminated is that section 205 of the Department of Energy Organization Act, in establishing an Energy Information Administration, stated that the Administrator

"* * * shall be responsible for carrying out a central, comprehensive, and unified energy data and information program which will collect, evaluate, assemble, analyze, and disseminate data and information which is relevant to energy resource reserves, energy production, demand, and technology, and related economic and statistical information."

We believe that the function of collecting and verifying energy data, including data on imported petroleum products, properly belongs in the Energy Information Administration.

Sincerely yours,

Signed Elmer B. Staats

Comptroller General
of the United States