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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store, Automotive Association Opposes Trump Administration Proposal to Make New Jersey Vulnerable Again**

*Plan to eliminate Northeast Gasoline Supply Reserve, created after Sandy, will harm NJ motorists and station owners.*

*It seems that the new solution for government to fix budget problems is to raid anything with the word "Reserve" in its title.*

NJGCA Executive Director Sal Risalvato makes the following comments in response to the plan by the Trump Administration, as part of their proposed budget, to eliminate the Northeast Gasoline Supply Reserve (NGSR) and cut in half the nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR):

"It is amazing to me how quickly people can forget. It has been less than 5 years since our state was ravaged by Superstorm Sandy, and already there are folks down in DC trying to undo the protections we have put in place.

At the time, no one expected that once the storm clouds cleared and we were just beginning to clean up the debris, our battered state would be subjected to another crisis, a gas crisis which would last a full two weeks after the Superstorm had left. Those old enough to remember the fuel crises of the 1970s felt transported back in the time as they were stuck in long lines to fill up their cars. Things were so bad that Governor Christie even declared a State of Energy Emergency and the implementation of even-odd gas rationing.

The gas crisis ground the economy in northern New Jersey to a halt as our several million residents were unable to get to the store, get back to work, or even power their homes with their emergency generators as a result of this shortage.

Having been deeply involved in the State's reaction to the crisis, I can state unequivocally that the cause of the gas crisis was NOT the lack of power. It was only for the first two or three days that a significant number of gas stations had fuel in the ground but no power to pump it. Power companies made getting stations back online a priority.

The cause of the crisis was a **lack of supply** caused by the unprecedented storm surge that knocked out a variety of our refineries, terminals, and other fueling infrastructure. Tanker trucks that normally filled up in Linden and Perth Amboy were driving down to Paulsboro for fuel, cutting their frequency of delivery by two-thirds or more. Tanker trucks full of fuel were being brought in from as far as Indiana to try and meet the public's demand. I know of multiple station owners who went a full ten days with their power on and no fuel deliveries. Station owners were getting a delivery, selling out in three or four hours, and closing shop again for days.

Established only three years ago, the NGSR now stores several hundred thousand barrels of gasoline here in New Jersey, ready to go should the worst happen again.

This short-sighted proposal from the Trump Administration puts millions of New Jerseyans at risk. I am not aware of any projections for the future that call for *lower* sea levels and *weaker* hurricanes. Let us remember that when Sandy made landfall it was too weak to even be classified as a hurricane. Imagine the turmoil we will be in if we are hit by an actual hurricane, even just a Category 2 or 3. Our fundamental vulnerabilities are the same. Our terminals and fuel infrastructure are still close to the coast.

The only protection we have from a Sandy repeat (or worse) is this Northeast Reserve, and now the President wants to take this security away. How does he expect to get to and from his Bridgewater golf course every weekend if the roads are jammed with motorists stuck in gas lines?

We also object to the plan to cut in half the size of the nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The SPR is exactly what it says it is—a strategic asset that is to be used only in limited, emergency situations. It was created to safeguard us during wartime, natural disasters, or conspiracies by overseas oil producers; it was not meant as a onetime sugar rush to fill a structural budget deficit. I opposed the unnecessary drawdown by president Obama back in 2011, and that was a fraction of what this Administration is calling for.

What is the upside to this significantly increased risk for our state and our nation? A few hundred million dollars a year, as part of an annual budget that spends \$3.6 trillion with a deficit of hundreds of billions of dollars. This plan will jeopardize our energy and economic security for a few drops in the bucket, or should I say a few drops in the barrel.

There is a dangerous attitude emerging among some of our elected leaders. It seems that when they find a reserve, whether it be a financial reserve or a petroleum reserve, that has been responsibly put aside to prepare for the worst, their first instinct is to find out how they can raid it and spend it all off right now, rather than make the hard decisions that they need to make if our future is to experience any prosperity.

I hope that all of New Jersey's representatives in Congress, as well as Governor Christie, will stand with our small businesses and motorists in opposition to eliminating these necessary safeguards."

*NJGCA is a nonprofit trade association representing nearly one thousand independent small businesses in the gasoline retail, convenience store, and automotive repair industries.*