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November 9, 2023

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As Veterans Day approaches, we write to you as co-chairs of the **Veterans for Renewable Fuels** to applaud your commitment to American-made bioenergy and to encourage your administration to fully embrace the national security benefits of homegrown renewable fuels like ethanol. We wholeheartedly agree with your statements that ethanol “reduces our reliance on foreign oil,” “stretches the supply,” and “gives you a choice at the pump.”<sup>1</sup> But there is more work to do to fully realize the energy security potential of renewable fuels.

Veterans for Renewable Fuels (VRF) is a newly formed group of U.S. military veterans currently working in America’s ethanol industry. We have come together to recognize and celebrate the tremendous contributions veterans make to improving our national security through the production of American-made ethanol. According to the Department of Energy, nearly **one out of every six** workers in the U.S. ethanol industry is a military veteran.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the ethanol workforce has a higher concentration of veterans than any other segment of the U.S. energy industry, and our veteran density is three times that of the national labor force.

The prevalence of former military service members working in the ethanol industry comes as no surprise to us. Employment in the renewable fuels sector allows veterans like us to continue honoring our commitment to make our nation stronger and more independent. We take enormous pride in the fact that we work in an industry that simultaneously improves America’s energy security, economic vitality, and environmental quality. In addition, the ethanol industry has created tens of thousands of good jobs in rural communities across the country, allowing us to share with our families the small-town way of life that is central to American values and our cultural identity.

Over the past 50 years, renewable fuels have led the transition to a more secure and resilient U.S. energy market. Since the Arab oil embargo of 1973, the U.S. industry has cumulatively produced 6.1 billion barrels of cleaner-burning ethanol—displacing the amount of gasoline refined from 9.3 billion barrels of crude oil. Meanwhile, U.S. petroleum imports from OPEC

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<sup>1</sup> The White House. [“Remarks by President Biden on Lowering Energy Costs for Working Families.”](#) Menlo, Iowa. April 12, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Energy. [“United States Energy & Employment Report 2023.”](#) June 2023.

are down almost 60 percent since the 1973 crisis and down 80 percent from the peak level in 2007, which—not coincidentally—was the year the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) was extended and expanded.

However, true American energy independence has remained elusive. As recent events have shown, geopolitical unrest—like conflict in Israel and war in Ukraine—still significantly influences gas prices for U.S. consumers. While increased domestic energy production has unquestionably helped to blunt the impact of geopolitical shocks on fuel prices and supplies, the American consumer’s pocketbook is still affected by events unfolding halfway around the world. For example, U.S. oil prices jumped more than \$21 per barrel (23 percent) in the month following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Not surprisingly, gas prices followed, surging to a record high of \$5.01 per gallon in June 2022.

Moreover, even though the U.S. is now a net energy exporter, we still import a lot of crude oil. In 2022, nearly 2.3 billion barrels of oil worth roughly \$232 billion were imported by U.S. refiners. About 16 percent of our oil imports still come from OPEC, meaning our nation continues to transfer billions of dollars every year to the cartel. In 2022 alone, the U.S. sent roughly \$36 billion—or \$275 per American household—to OPEC to pay for crude oil imports.

As long as U.S. gas prices are substantially influenced by developments in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and other regions, no one can credibly argue that the United States is truly “energy independent.” Yes, our nation’s energy market is undeniably more secure, resilient, and diversified than it was 50 years ago—and that’s great news for American consumers. But there is plenty of room for further progress. Ethanol and other domestic renewable fuels hold the key to a safer and more secure American energy future.

That is why VRF’s advocacy will focus on ensuring renewable fuels have a prominent role in our nation’s energy strategy. From removing arcane barriers that prevent year-round consumer access to fuel containing higher levels of ethanol (like E15) to protecting the RFS to ensuring smooth implementation of the clean energy provisions from last year’s Inflation Reduction Act, we look forward to working with your administration to capture ethanol’s full potential as a homegrown, low-carbon, low-cost energy source.

Sincerely,



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Jefferson, Wisconsin  
Co-chair, Veterans for Renewable Fuels  
U.S. Marine Corps (1982-1993)



**Tony Leiding**  
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