

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 23, 2026

The Honorable Andrew N. Ferguson
Chair
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Chair Ferguson:

We write regarding our concerns that big corporations may seek to profit off President Trump's war against Iran by unfairly raising prices for American consumers. Last month, President Trump started an illegal war with Iran,¹ creating broad supply chain disruptions and widespread uncertainty in the global economy. Big corporations may capitalize on this uncertainty to hike prices more than is warranted by actual input cost increases, price gouging everyday Americans while enriching executives and padding investors' pockets. We request that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) provide information on its plans to protect American consumers from war-related corporate price gouging, and investigate and prosecute individuals and companies that price gouge American consumers.

Price gouging occurs when sellers expand their profit margins by raising prices far more than necessary to cover increases in input costs. Price gougers often blame inflation and supply chain disruptions to justify these excessive price increases. For example, when President Trump began implementing his on-again, off-again tariffs in early 2025, "a significant share" of companies used the uncertainty surrounding the tariffs to hike the prices of goods and services that were not subject to tariffs, "taking advantage of an escalating pricing environment to increase prices."² Some grocery retailers used supply chain disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic "as an opportunity to further hike prices to increase their profits, and profits remain[ed] elevated even as supply chain pressures ... eased."³ There is also recent precedent for price gouging during wartime: after Putin launched his war in Ukraine, oil companies jacked up prices and raked in record profits, while lining their investors' pockets with billions of dollars of stock buybacks.⁴

¹ Public Citizen, "Trump's Illegal War With Iran," Robert Weissman and Lisa Gilbert, March 10, 2026, <https://www.citizen.org/news/trumps-illegal-war-with-iran/>.

² Federal Reserve Bank of New York, "Are Businesses Absorbing the Tariffs or Passing Them On to Their Customers?," Jason R. Abel, Richard Deitz, Sebastian Heise, Ben Hyman, and Nick Montalbano, June 4, 2025, <https://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2025/06/are-businesses-absorbing-the-tariffs-or-passing-them-on-to-their-customers/>.

³ Federal Trade Commission, "Feeding America in a Time of Crisis: The United States Grocery Supply Chain and the COVID-19 Pandemic," March 21, 2024, pg. 20, https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/p162318supplychainreport2024.pdf.

⁴ CNN, "Shell announces \$4 billion share buyback as profits double," Hanna Ziady, October 27, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/27/energy/shell-profit-share-buybacks/index.html>.

Now, big corporations may be in position to take advantage of President Trump's war with Iran to price gouge Americans. President Trump's illegal war has severely disrupted trade routes through the Strait of Hormuz, a major shipping channel, and corporations may use these supply chain disruptions as an excuse to hike prices beyond what is necessary to cover any legitimate cost increases and pass on those higher costs to consumers. These price gouging concerns are particularly acute for oil, gasoline, and fertilizer, as the closure of the Strait of Hormuz has reportedly stalled the shipment of "a fifth of global oil and gas supplies and a third of fertilizer supplies."⁵ Gas prices have spiked by roughly 30 percent since February 28,⁶ fertilizer prices have jumped by 30-40 percent,⁷ and jet fuel prices are up roughly 60 percent.⁸

These rising input costs could also lead to downstream price increases in other industries, including the food and airline industries. Indeed, some airlines have already started jacking up their prices.⁹ Meanwhile, corporate executives are bragging to investors about how their companies stand to profit from President Trump's illegal war. The chairman of a company that owns and leases container ships compared the shipping disruptions to a "mini situation of COVID" and stated that because of the disruption, "I think the earnings of liner companies should increase for a period of time."¹⁰

Similar corporate profiteering followed the supply chain shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Major food companies used the increased cost of inputs like fuel and fertilizer as cover to jack up prices beyond what was necessary to cover increases in their costs. For example, while global food prices reached an all-time high in 2022,¹¹ Kraft Heinz increased its profits by nearly 450 percent, and Cal-Maine increased its profits by 718 percent.¹²

We introduced the *Price Gouging Prevention Act* to strengthen federal authority to combat price gouging, including by creating a rebuttable presumption of corporate price gouging during exceptional market shocks such as war or military action.¹³ Congress should pass that bill to give the FTC additional tools to combat war-related price gouging. But the FTC already has authority under existing consumer protection laws to combat price gouging.

⁵ The Guardian, "From petrol to groceries: how Middle East crisis is driving up prices," Rory Carroll, March 4, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/mar/04/middle-east-crisis-petrol-groceries-rising-prices>.

⁶ AAA Fuel Prices, "National Average Gas Prices," Accessed March 23, 2026, <https://gasprices.aaa.com/>; AAA Fuel Prices, "Seasonal Shift Toward Rising Gas Prices," February 26, 2026, <https://gasprices.aaa.com/seasonal-shift-toward-rising-gas-prices/>.

⁷ Reuters, "War in Iran threatens fresh food-price shock across developing world," Libby George and Karin Strohecker, March 20, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/war-iran-threatens-fresh-food-price-shock-across-developing-world-2026-03-20/>.

⁸ AP News, "Jet fuel prices are rising. That could make summer flights more expensive," Rio Yamat, March 14, 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/jet-fuel-airfares-flights-prices-oil-ac2446896f112746345702bd6e1986cc>.

⁹ New York Times, "How Will Rising Oil Prices Affect Airlines? Here's What to Know," Elaine Glusac, March 10, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/10/travel/airline-prices-mideast-war.html>.

¹⁰ Investing.com, "Earnings call transcript: Global Ship Lease Q4 2025 sees strong financials," March 5, 2026, <https://www.investing.com/news/transcripts/earnings-call-transcript-global-ship-lease-q4-2025-sees-strong-financials-93CH-4544785>.

¹¹ CSIS, "Russia, Ukraine, and Global Food Security: A Two-Year Assessment," Caitlin Welsh, February 27, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-ukraine-and-global-food-security-two-year-assessment>.

¹² TIME, "How Food Companies' Massive Profits Are Making Your Groceries More Expensive," Nik Popli, April 6, 2023, <https://time.com/6269366/food-company-profits-make-groceries-expensive/>.

¹³ Price Gouging Prevention Act of 2025, S. 2321, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/2321>.

We urge the FTC to use its authority under Section 6(b) of the *Federal Trade Commission Act*—which authorizes the FTC to require companies to provide “reports or answers in writing to specific questions”¹⁴ about their business practices—to investigate any war-related price gouging, and to issue a report on its findings. In addition, we urge the FTC to use its authority under Section 5 of the *FTC Act* to investigate and prosecute companies engaging in “unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce.”¹⁵ Finally, to understand the FTC’s plans to protect consumers from war-related price gouging, and its timeline for doing so, we ask that you provide answers to the following questions by April 6, 2026:

1. How will you ensure President Trump’s war in Iran does not result in corporations price gouging consumers?
2. What steps will the FTC take to inform small businesses and the public regarding the protections that federal competition and consumer protection laws provide against excessive cost increases?
3. What steps will the FTC take to investigate reports of price gouging by big corporations related to the war in Iran?
4. What steps will the FTC take to enforce competition and consumer protection laws against individuals and corporations that the agency determines are price gouging consumers?
5. What steps will the FTC take to ensure that consumers who have paid excessive prices due to war-related price gouging are made whole?

Sincerely,


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator


Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress


Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

¹⁴ 15 U.S.C. 46(b).

¹⁵ 15 U.S.C. 45.

Edward J. Markey

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United States Senator