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Contact: Sue Walitsky (Cardin) 202-224-4524

Marilyn Campbell (Van Hollen) 202-225-5384

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CARDIN AND VAN HOLLEN LISTEN TO SMALL BUSINESSES HURTING FROM RISING GAS PRICES; PLEDGE HELP FROM DEMOCRATS IN SENATE AND HOUSE

Washington, DC – **U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)** and **Congressman Chris Van Hollen (MD-08)** today heard first-hand from Maryland small business owners about how rising gas prices are hurting their business and their employees. Speaking at the Takoma Junction Citgo in Takoma Park, Maryland, Senator Cardin and Congressman Van Hollen pledged to take their message back to the Senate and the House as they work to overcome partisan obstacles to solving our energy crisis.

Senator Cardin is a co-sponsor of S. 2991 the *Consumer-First Energy Act of 2008* that has been blocked from consideration in the Senate, along with the *Energy Independence and Security Act*. Last Friday, Congressman Chris Van Hollen introduced the *Energy Markets Anti-Manipulation and Integrity Restoration Act* that would squelch the rampant speculation contributing to rising oil and gas prices.

“Small business owners in Maryland and across the country are hurting. Congress has a responsibility to act swiftly to tackle the skyrocketing price at the pump and address the long-term crisis of America’s energy security,” said **Senator Cardin**, a member of the Senate Small Business and Environment and Public Works Committees. “Sixty-two percent of small business owners use a vehicle in their business. They need automobiles. They have to fill these tanks with gasoline. In the short-term, we need to provide immediate relief, not partisan gridlock. In the long-term, we need to end our dependence on oil and move our nation toward alternative, renewable sources of energy.”

With high fuel prices squeezing our family budgets and burdening our economy, the American public needs relief,” said **Congressman Van Hollen**. “We are committed to reducing our dependence on oil, investing in the renewable energy sources here in the U.S. and cracking down on energy market manipulators.”

Participating in the press conference today were Dr. James Dula, president of the Prince George’s Chamber of Commerce; Roy Littlefield, Executive Director of the Washington, Maryland, Delaware Service Station and Automobile Association; Sterling Crockett, President of Sterling Construction Services of Rockville, Judy Stephenson, President of OfficePro Software Trainers of Rockville, and Jim Sweet, President of Smokey Glen Farms of Gaithersburg.

The majority drive over 50 miles a day in their automobiles to operate their businesses. Companies like Sterling Construction use diesel to power heavy equipment on their job sites every day. Small businesses don’t have the same availability of capital in order to buy equipment or the same availability of capital in order to keep their businesses afloat. Many small business owners are mortgaging their homes in order to keep their businesses going. Many are using credit cards with the highest possible interest rates to keep afloat. Now they have additional energy costs.

When President Bush took office in 2001, a gallon of regular gas cost \$1.46. More than seven years later, prices have climbed to more than \$4.07 per gallon of regular gas and nearly \$4.80 per gallon of diesel fuel.

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