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**SENATOR HEITMEIER FIGHTS TO PROTECT GAS CONSUMERS DURING
STATES OF EMERGENCY**

BILL MAKES IT THROUGH FIRST STEP IN LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

District 7 State Senator David Heitmeier (D-New Orleans) is fighting to protect consumers from gasoline price gouging during hurricanes and other emergencies. Senate Bill 272, which will effectively put a cap on the wholesale price of gasoline during declared states of emergency, made it through the first step in the legislative process this week when it received approval from the Senate Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works. Testimony during the committee hearing revealed that the Attorney General's office does not have the authority to enforce gasoline price gouging at the wholesale level. This bill will correct the problem and save consumers tens of millions of dollars during an emergency like a hurricane.

"During Hurricane Gustav I witnessed firsthand the price of gas go up \$1.20 overnight and decided then I was going to do what I could to stop that kind of situation," said Senator Heitmeier. "I think it's simply unfair that during evacuations the gas refineries are allowed to inflate the price of gasoline. I'm particularly concerned that the Attorney General doesn't have the authority to enforce gas price gouging. Everyone has to make sacrifices when governing authorities in this state are recommending that people flee their homes for their own safety. I firmly believe that when emergency officials are recommending citizens fill up their tanks and artificially inflating the demand for gasoline, the gas companies should not be allowed to take advantage of the situation. Senate Bill 272 will allow us to work with the industry to put an end to this."

Senate Bill 272 puts a cap of 10% above the average price of gasoline for the 30 days prior to a declared state of emergency unless gas producers can show proof of an increase in supply costs. The legislation calls for the cap to last for the first 20 days of the declaration or until the declared state is over, whichever is less. Senator Heitmeier says that time frame should allow motorists to evacuate and return home without being subjected to artificial or inflated gas prices.

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