

A PETITION BY HOUSE CAFETERIA CONSUMERS

Hon. Dan Beard
Chief Administrative Officer
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Beard:

It was with surprise and bewilderment that we learned last week of Restaurant Associates' plans to raise prices on food items by as much as 47% in the next week. The official reasoning provided by the vendor, the increase in global gasoline and food prices, strikes us as insincere. Are we to believe that prices will be adjusted downward should such pricing pressures ease?

Our concerns are based on some specific examples that appear to demonstrate that Restaurant Associates has either mismanaged its way into its present condition, or has been forced to spend extravagantly by your office. Some of these instances are listed below.

According to a *Roll Call* story dated July 10, 2008, the House of Representatives should have earned \$362,000 from Restaurant Associates in its first four and a half months. But your office orchestrated a \$227,000 rebate to Restaurant Associates so that they would not have to share in any costs related to "greening" efforts in the House. At the time, your office's spokesman claimed that despite this scheme, Restaurant Associates was generating more revenue for the House than the previous contractor had. Have world food and gasoline prices wiped out the entire profit margin for Restaurant Associates since July?

A separate article, dated September 24, 2008 in the *Des Moines Register*, reported that Restaurant Associates invested \$75,000 in a machine "to compact the waste from the lunch and snack rooms so it can be sent for composting at a U.S. Department of Agriculture research center in suburban Maryland or at a private recycling facility." Perhaps that machine could be sold in order to offset the rising energy and food prices.

The same article states that the water bottles sold by the House cafeterias sell for 10 cents more than they do at any other Restaurant Associates establishment nationwide. Do global gasoline and food prices affect the House of Representatives more substantially than any other place Restaurant Associates functions?

We can think of no other restaurant that has seen fit to raise its prices so drastically in the past 10 months. You have already felt it appropriate to forego the revenue owed to the House by Restaurant Associates. Now staff and visitors are forced to empty their wallets to further boost the profits of this contractor. Rather than continuing to protect this behavior, we the undersigned call upon you, in your capacity as Chief Administrative Officer, to work with Restaurant Associates to reverse its decision and work to ensure

that Capitol Hill staff and visitors to the complex have an opportunity to continue to dine at affordable prices. Otherwise, no one should be surprised if, just as any sensible consumer would do, Hill staffers begin to take our business to other nearby Capitol Hill dining establishments that treat us with greater respect.

Sincerely,

(Signatory List attached)

CC:

Hon. Robert Brady, Chairman

Hon. Vernon J. Ehlers, Ranking Member

House Administration Committee

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205. Courtney Reinhard
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