

## US Senate Committee Passes Bill Pressuring OPEC, Russia Over High Oil Prices

The bill, if passed, would open up Opec members and partners to lawsuits over collusion on crude oil prices

By [Middle East Eye](#)

Global Research, May 09, 2022

[Middle East Eye](#) 6 May 2022

Region: [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Oil and Energy](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the “Translate Website” drop down menu on the top banner of our home page (Desktop version).

To receive Global Research’s Daily Newsletter (selected articles), [click here](#).

Visit and follow us on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

\*\*\*

*A [US](#) Senate committee has passed a bill that could open the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and its partners, including [Russia](#), to lawsuits for collusion on the rise in crude oil prices.*

The No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels (Nopec) bill, sponsored by Republican **Chuck Grassley** and Democrat **Amy Klobuchar**, passed 17-4 in the Senate Judiciary Committee on Thursday.

However, it will need to pass the full Senate and House and be signed by **President Joe Biden** in order to become law.

The bill would change US antitrust law to revoke the sovereign immunity that has long protected Opec and its national oil companies from lawsuits.

By doing so, the US attorney general would then have the power to sue Opec, its members such as [Saudi Arabia](#) or its partners like Russia, in federal court on charges including market manipulation.

“I believe that free and competitive markets are better for consumers than markets controlled by a cartel of state-owned oil companies ... competition is the very basis of our economic system,” Klobuchar [said](#) in a statement.

White House spokesperson **Jen Psaki** [said](#) the administration has concerns about the “potential implications and unintended consequences” of the legislation and that the White House is still studying the bill.

Versions of the legislation have failed in Congress for more than two decades. But lawmakers are increasingly worried about rising inflation driven in part by prices for US gasoline, which briefly hit a record above \$4.30 a gallon this spring.

Saudi Arabia and other Opec members have rebuffed requests by the US to boost oil production beyond gradual amounts, even as global oil consumption recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic and Russian supply falls after its invasion of Ukraine.

Opec+, a partnership between Opec members and other oil producers including Russia, agreed on Thursday to stick to its existing plans to reverse the curbs with modest increases for another month.

## **Calls to rebalance US-Saudi ties**

The Nopec bill is intended to protect US consumers and businesses from engineered spikes in the cost of gasoline, but some lawmakers and oil lobbyists warn that it could have dangerous unintended consequences.

In 2019, Saudi Arabia [threatened](#) to sell oil in currencies other than the dollar if Washington passed Nopec, a move that could undermine the dollar's status as the world's main reserve currency, reduce Washington's clout in global trade and weaken its ability to enforce sanctions on nation-states.

The kingdom made similar news earlier this year when the Wall Street Journal [reported](#) that it was considering using the Chinese Yuan in oil deals with Beijing.

**Senator John Cornyn**, a Republican from Texas, the top US oil-producing state, opposed the bill, saying it could prompt Opec to restrict shipments to the country.

"If we really want to deal with price at the pump, we ought to produce more oil and gas here in America," Cornyn said.

The bill is also opposed by the American Petroleum Institute, a top oil and gas lobbying group. In a letter to the committee's leaders, API said Nopec "creates significant potential detrimental exposure to US diplomatic, military and business interests while likely having limited impact on the market concerns driving the legislation".

The bill, meanwhile, comes amid a growing attitude in Congress to punish Saudi Arabia for its refusal to cooperate with the US on a response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine as well as a number of human rights issues.

Last month, a group of leading lawmakers [sent a letter](#) to US **Secretary of State Antony Blinken**, calling on the administration to rebalance ties with Riyadh, citing Saudi Arabia's refusal to boost oil production in recent months.

**Tom Malinowski**, a Democratic congressman, [tweeted](#) on Thursday:

"The main reason gas prices are sky high is that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are deliberately helping Russia, and undercutting our sanctions, by refusing to increase oil production".

The congressman also recently [sent a letter](#) to the administration seeking to rein in any

countries receiving American weapons while also being involved in the harassment of dissidents living in the US.

\*

Note to readers: Please click the share buttons above or below. Follow us on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

*Featured image is from The Bullet*

The original source of this article is [Middle East Eye](#)  
Copyright © [Middle East Eye](#), [Middle East Eye](#), 2022

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Middle East Eye](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)  
[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)