

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**of**  
**Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce Chair Janice D. Schakowsky**  
***Hearing on “Pandemic Profiteers: Legislation to Stop Corporate Price Gouging”***

**February 2, 2022**

Today we will consider legislation to protect consumers from corporate greed and price gouging related to the pandemic. The **“COVID-19 Price Gouging Prevention Act”** will empower the Federal Trade Commission and state attorneys general with the enforcement tools needed to effectively go after price gougers.

Throughout this public health emergency, we have seen skyrocketing billionaire wealth and corporate greed take advantage of people’s fear and uncertainty. We have seen unconscionable price hikes in everyday consumer goods like toilet paper, face masks, and hand sanitizer as well as in critical medical supplies like respirators and personal protective equipment.

In the last month alone, we have seen Big Pharma increase the prices of **554 drugs** with an **average price hike of 6.3 percent**. Pfizer has raised prices on 125 drugs, more than any other company! This came **after** Pfizer reported record profits in 2021 from their taxpayer funded COVID-19 vaccine; and **after** boosting their CEO’s pay **17 percent to \$21 million dollars**.

Johnson & Johnson executives are no different. They raised prices across all consumer health products despite a **13.6 percent increase in revenue** last year and projecting **\$3-5 billion in revenue in 2022 from their COVID-19 vaccine alone**. Instead of giving Americans a break from skyrocketing prices, companies are pocketing the extra cash.

Last week it was reported that UnitedHealth Group spent **\$5 billion dollars** buying back its own stock and paying shareholders **\$5 billion in dividends** in 2021. This came **after** it reported **\$24 billion in profits** – the largest **ever** in its industry’s history.

And these trends aren’t limited to health-related goods and services. S&P 500 companies 2021 earnings were **up nearly 50 percent** for the year and corporate profit margins reached a **70-year high**.

Procter & Gamble has repeatedly raised prices on its U.S. products during the pandemic while raking in **\$21 billion in profits in 2021** – up 6 percent from the previous year. Grocery giant Kroger posted record earnings during the pandemic, **including \$132 billion in 2020**. All while raising prices, decreasing worker pay by 8.1 percent, authorizing billions in stock buybacks, and its CEO taking a **\$6.4 million dollar raise**. Enough is enough.

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We are at war with this virus. During World War II, war profiteers were held accountable. The same rule should apply here. We will not tolerate corporations taking advantage of American consumers by price gouging, especially not during a pandemic.

The critical legislation we consider today will help put an end to these unacceptable price hikes.

Thank you to the witnesses for joining us.