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AG Ellison: 'Long past time to protect Minnesotans from emergency profiteering'

Applauds House passage of HF844 banning price-gouging in emergencies, urges passage in Senate; bill gives enforcement authority to Attorney General's Office

March 22, 2021 (**SAINT PAUL**) — Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison released the following statement on the Minnesota House passage today of HF844, a bill to make price-gouging during emergencies illegal and giving the Attorney General's Office enforcement authority. The Senate is yet to vote on the companion bill, SF965.

"It's tough enough for people to afford their lives day to day: in emergencies, people shouldn't have to choose between affording their lives and the staples and services they need to live," Attorney General Ellison said. "Fortunately, Governor Walz banned pandemic profiteering during the COVID-19 emergency, but Minnesotans shouldn't have to depend on executive action to protect them: it's long past time for Minnesota to join the rest of the country and pass a law protecting Minnesotans from emergency profiteering, when they need that protection most. Ultimately, Minnesotans need a law protecting them from all price-gouging; protecting them from emergency profiteering is a strong first step.

"I thank the Minnesota House for passing this important bill, and in particular Rep. Zack Stephenson for authoring the bill. I encourage the Senate to pass Sen. Lindsey Port's companion bill so Minnesotans can be protected under the law."

Currently, Minnesota is one of only a handful of states without a law prohibiting price-gouging during states of emergency, and one of only 14 states that lack any law against price-gouging. While Governor Walz's Executive Order 20-10, which bans price-gouging on essential goods and services during the COVID-19 pandemic, offers some safeguards, Minnesotans need a law on the books so residents are not dependent on executive action for protection.

During the COVID-19 emergency, the Attorney General's office has taken significant action to protect Minnesotans from price-gouging under Executive Order 20-10, including:

- More than 2,400 complaints received and investigated.
- More than 100 informal resolutions after contact with the Attorney General's Office.
- Six court-filed settlements stopping profiteering and recovering money for Minnesotans.
- Warning major online retailers that they are not exempt from the ban on pandemic profiteering.

Examples of pandemic profiteering in Minnesota during the pandemic include:

- N95 and KN95 face masks for as much as $13/mask.
- Toilet paper for $3/roll.
- Eggs at three times the pre-emergency price.
- Rice and many other non-perishable food products at double/triple pre-emergency prices.