

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 16, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20500-0005

Dear President Obama:

I write to ask for your direct assistance in establishing reasonable timelines for responsibly developing the plentiful oil and gas resources in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) off Alaska's Arctic coasts. Uncertainty is irreparably harming our industry and economy, and Alaskans deserve a clear timeline and process within the next 60 days.

As you well know, enormous public and private resources have been invested responding to April's tragic Deepwater Horizon incident, the subsequent clean up, and the multiple investigations. Yet while not formally covered by any federally imposed moratorium, Alaska has been lost in the mix. Interior Department decisions have left thoroughly reviewed and strengthened exploratory plans for shallow water wells in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas stalled with no clear path forward. The simple fact is timelines for development in the Arctic are by nature long. Adding unnecessary delay costs Alaskans jobs and our nation a proven and responsible source of energy.

Federal leases last for 10 years. Only with my intercession last month did the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the new Bureau of Oceans and Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) finally issue routine Incidental Harassment Authorizations and final permissions allowing seismic activity for Statoil and Shell in the Beaufort Sea, some five years after the purchase of those leases. Shell also had to shelve plans for a much slimmed down exploration plan for three wells in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas at a cost of over \$100 million and loss of some 600 jobs.

I recognize that we Alaskans bear the burden of proving we can responsibly develop these resources. Last summer, I introduced my *Inuvikput* package of legislation, seven bills to address resource development and other issues in a changing Arctic. This July, I supplemented that with three additional measures, most of which were incorporated into S. 3597, the SHORE Act, that passed out of the Senate Commerce Committee in early August. In addition to an August 10<sup>th</sup> visit to the Arctic coast with U.S. Coast

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Guard Commandant Robert Papp, one week later, I held a Commerce Committee field hearing in Barrow to highlight Coast Guard, NOAA and other federal agency legal and logistic needs for a changing Arctic.

I also appreciate the BOEMRE hearing held by Director Michael Bromwich in Anchorage that focused on Arctic OCS development. His short visit was a welcome and brief introduction to my state but hardly a substantive step leading to a short-term resolution.

At 24 billion barrels of oil and 100 trillion cubic feet of clean-burning natural gas, the enormous resources of the Chukchi and Beaufort seas can safely supply a significant portion of America's energy needs. The residents of the North Slope rightly demand that we do this right. Under the best case scenarios for the development of renewable resource technologies, our country will consume billions of barrels of oil over the coming years and our utilities increasingly require clean-burning natural gas. It is clear to all Alaskans we need the jobs that will come from these resources as oil and gas reserves on the North Slope dwindle.

Mr. President, my fellow Alaskans and I stand ready to begin the hard work of responsibly developing these oil and gas resources and providing them to our fellow Americans. What we need is a willing, engaged federal partner and a realistic timetable or plan of action. As crucial months go by, we have had none of these. We need your action and direction now.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich  
United States Senator

cc: Secretary Ken Salazar, DOI  
Director Michael Bromwich, BOEMRE  
Senator Lisa Murkowski  
Representative Don Young  
Governor Sean Parnell  
Mayor Edward Itta