

LISA MURKOWSKI
ALASKA

COMMITTEES:
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
RANKING MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR,
AND PENSIONS
INDIAN AFFAIRS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0203
(202) 224-6665
(202) 224-5301 FAX

510 L STREET, SUITE 550
ANCHORAGE, AK 99501-1956
(907) 271-3735

101 12TH AVENUE, ROOM 216
FAIRBANKS, AK 99701-6278
(907) 456-0233

4079 TONGASS AVENUE, SUITE 204
KETCHIKAN, AK 99901-5526
(907) 225-6880

851 EAST WESTPOINT DRIVE, SUITE 307
WASILLA, AK 99654-7142
(907) 376-7665

July 29, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of the Secretary
1849 C. St., NW, Mail Stop 7229
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing following the ruling of the DC Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals July 28th clarifying its April 17th ruling involving future Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas leasing. As I understand the order, the Department is free to proceed with all OCS lease sales currently scheduled under the existing five-year OCS schedule nationally with the exception of proposed sales in three lease areas in northern and western Alaska: the Beaufort, Chukchi and Bering Seas.

As I understand the order, the Court is directing that the Department within 60 days update the court on the status of the Department's efforts to complete a more detailed analysis of the potential environmental impacts of OCS development on the near shore tidal zones in Alaska waters and to continue to file updates every 60 days until the analysis is completed and issued. I had understood that the Department started such an analysis almost immediately after issuance of the DC Circuit's ruling this spring and given that the analysis requires no new research or field work, I assume it can be completed relatively quickly by staff.

I simply wish to encourage the Department to finalize and issue the new analysis as soon as possible to address court concerns and then to proceed with related permit processing so that oil and natural gas leasing, and pre-existing exploration and development work, can resume in Alaska OCS waters as quickly as possible. While we all want planning and permitting to fully protect the environment and critical whaling, fishery, marine mammal and birdlife habitat that surrounds Alaska, the nation clearly needs the 22.63 billion barrels of oil and 98.97 trillion cubic of natural gas, by mean updated Minerals Management Service estimates, that the three lease areas are expected to hold.

The energy is needed, not just to provide domestic supplies that improve our energy and economic security and provide employment during this time of

recession, but because additional natural gas resources will improve chances for construction of an Alaska natural gas pipeline that will move existing Arctic gas to market — gas that is vital to our nation's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the dangers of global climate change.

The DC Circuit's ruling and the Department's six-month OCS review process have had the effect of indirectly delaying progress on exploration efforts in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, which have funneled billions of dollars into the U.S. Treasury. It is important to both the holders of the leases, and to Alaskan citizens whose jobs are tied to exploration and development efforts, for OCS leasing, exploration and development in northern Alaska waters to resume as soon as it properly can.

I hope you will encourage the Department to complete its required court-ordered new environmental analysis promptly. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Murkowski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "M".

Lisa Murkowski,
U.S. Senator, Alaska

cc: Kim Elton, Alaska Representative to the Secretary