

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 7, 2013

The Honorable Edward Markey  
2108 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Markey:

I write to register great frustration with your March 6 letter to Secretary Ken Salazar about the plight of a small number of rural Alaskans in my state who are being denied access to basic life and safety needs because of federal ignorance about our way of life. I'm especially irritated you didn't bother to reach out to me and try to gain a real understanding of the dire situation facing residents of King Cove, Alaska.

In one of my first votes as a U.S. Senator in 2009, Congress approved a land exchange to accommodate a single-lane gravel road through just 206 acres of the 315,000-acre Izembek National Wildlife Refuge to provide access to the commercial airport in Cold Bay 25 miles away. As part of the approved land exchange, the community and the State of Alaska were willing to add an additional 60,000 acres to the Izembek Refuge and others on the Alaska Peninsula. During the years-long Environmental Impact Statement process, despite repeated attempts, the residents of King Cove were denied an opportunity to meet face-to-face with Secretary Ken Salazar to make their case. To Secretary Salazar's credit, they recently were granted that opportunity, and I believe he was moved by their plight. I am hopeful he will do the right thing in his remaining time as Secretary and will approve this road.

Your letter is typical of those from national Democrats who fail to understand the needs of Americans who live in the West, especially in some of the most remote and extreme parts of our nation such as Alaska. Life is especially challenging in these communities where the nearest hospital is an expensive airplane, boat or snow machine ride away. Yet these Americans deserve the same opportunities for basic health care and public safety as those who live in Boston or elsewhere in our country. While the habitat values of the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge are indisputable, the residents of King Cove have taken good care of this area for many generations.

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In the future, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss the unique challenges facing residents of my state so you can better understand that East Coast values do not always apply to other parts of the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Begich". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Mark Begich

United States Senator