

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 30, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar  
Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20240-0002

Dear Secretary Salazar:

As you finalize your decisions on the 2007-2012 and 2012-2017 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Programs, I write in follow up to our recent discussions regarding OCS development off Alaska's coasts. I recognize the balance you are seeking, but it is important the process remains open, allowing exploration and production to move forward, even if additional requirements are imposed.

Together Alaska's Chukchi and Beaufort Seas hold more than 22 billion barrels of oil and 100 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Lease Sale 193, held in 2008, marked a record \$2.8 billion in bonus lease sale bids. Recent decisions by the Mineral Management Service and the Environmental Protection Agency make future development in these areas much more likely, creating thousands of jobs, increasing America's domestic energy production, and enabling the transition to cleaner sources.

The successful development of these reserves is key to the long-term viability of the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline and the future of the Alaska natural gas pipeline. The development of these areas, plus federal loan guarantees in the Energy bill awaiting consideration by the full Senate, are two critical federal steps needing to be taken to move forward on the gas pipeline. As you know, President Obama named the "gasline" as one of his top five clean energy projects.

In Alaska, we know how to responsibly develop oil and gas resources in extreme Arctic conditions. New partnerships to develop these areas by the Norwegian company, Statoil, will bring additional expertise in responsible Arctic offshore development. In the Senate, I have introduced a package of legislation reflecting the growing importance of the Arctic, to increase emergency response there, improve Arctic science and research, and establish a northern Coast Guard base to ensure our coastal communities are prepared for and benefit from this development.

I know you and your staff have worked very hard over the past year to obtain the best science and broad public comment on the two five-year plans. As you consider this

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information, I strongly urge to ensure the balance you strike in Alaska continues a strong leasing program in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. I encourage you to move forward on this plan in the very near future, creating a positive development environment as shippers consider their commitments during the upcoming open seasons for the Alaska natural gas pipeline.

I look forward to your upcoming announcement.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich  
United States Senator