

July 29, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell:

We strongly support the Energy and Natural Resources Committee's consideration of "The Offshore Production and Energizing National Security Act" (OPENS Act). The OPENS Act moves forward on providing Americans with more access to domestic offshore oil and natural gas resources; provides important revenue sharing for participating coastal states; and lifts the outdated, counterproductive ban on U.S. crude oil exports. We urge committee members to vote in favor of this important bill that will benefit consumers, create jobs, strengthen America's energy security, and enhance national security and international relations.

The OPENS Act takes a strong step in enhancing American energy security by expanding access in areas currently closed off to energy development on our nation's outer continental shelf (OCS). Currently, about 87 percent of America's OCS is off-limits to oil and natural gas exploration and development. While other countries around the world – including Canada, Cuba, and Mexico – are actively expanding their offshore energy programs, the U.S. continues to place the vast majority of our offshore areas off-limits to exploring for and developing our domestic offshore natural resources. By opening new areas in the Gulf of Mexico, Alaska OCS, and in the South Atlantic, the OPENS Act will create thousands of new jobs, result in billions of dollars of new private investment, and enhance our energy security. In addition, by including critical revenue sharing provisions, this bill will ensure that participating coastal states have the resources needed to ensure proper support of necessary infrastructure and other needs.

The OPENS Act also reverses the outdated, counterproductive prohibition on exporting U.S. crude oil – allowing these national assets to compete in the international marketplace. The public policy rationale for allowing U.S. crude oil exports—established by authoritative witnesses covering the entire spectrum of political opinion over the course of twelve Congressional hearings this year alone—is now compelling in terms of its enormous positive impact on U.S. jobs and GDP, America's trade deficit, as well as our national security and international relations with our allies and trading partners. As confirmed by GAO, EIA and CBO, allowing exports of American oil will reduce the price of gasoline and other refined petroleum products; Brookings and other experts estimate that the increased production from allowing exports has the potential to increase our nation's GDP by 1 percent. A recent study from the Harvard Business School characterized America's abundant and low-cost unconventional gas and oil resources as nothing less than "a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change the nation's economic and energy trajectory." In light of these extraordinary and roundly recognized public policy benefits that would accrue from allowing US oil exports, we find it indefensible that commercial sanctions on Iran may soon be lifted so that Iranian producers will be able to sell their oil on the world market while US producers cannot.

It is time for America to seize this opportunity, and fulfill its promise as a global energy superpower. We urge the Committee to support the OPENS Act on a bi-partisan basis.

Respectfully,



American Exploration & Production Council



National Ocean Industries Association



American Petroleum Institute



National Stripper Well Association



Energy Equipment and Infrastructure Alliance



Petroleum Equipment and Services Association



Independent Petroleum Association of America



Producers for American Crude Oil Exports



National Foreign Trade Council



U.S. Oil & Gas Association