

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 3, 2006

The Honorable Pete Domenici  
Chairman  
Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
364 Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman  
Ranking Democratic Member  
Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
364 Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Domenici and Ranking Member Bingaman:

We are writing to urge the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources to hold a hearing early this year on the status of the Alaska natural gas pipeline. Along with many of our colleagues, we are troubled that negotiations between Alaska natural gas producers and the State of Alaska still have not yielded an agreement, even as consumers are paying sky high natural gas prices.

With the congressionally mandated Department of Energy review of progress toward building the pipeline looming, we urge the Committee to take a leading role investigating this situation. While we have all heard reports of progress in these negotiations, absent a more open public review, we have no factual basis on which to judge these reports.

Most of the states in the nation use natural gas to heat their homes. In Iowa, for instance, 75% of residences are heated with natural gas. In Maine, the major power plants must rely on natural gas imported from Canada. Also, agricultural states are heavily reliant upon natural gas as a source of fuel and feedstock for fertilizer, grain drying, crop irrigation and other uses. The impacts of higher natural gas prices are rippling throughout the economy.

What's so troubling about this situation is that construction of the pipeline garners near universal support. Congress worked admirably these past several years to pass a package of incentives for companies to build the pipeline so that the United States could become more reliant on its own natural resources. Rather than discuss new legislation to pursue other sources of natural gas, it would seem more appropriate to first ensure outside parties, along with the State of Alaska, come to terms and begin construction of the pipeline as Congress intended.

The North Slope of Alaska contains more than 35 trillion cubic feet of proven natural gas reserves which are unavailable for use without the pipeline. Many experts believe there are much larger reserves in the area. While we respect the primary role that Alaskans will play in the development of any future pipeline project, consumers throughout the country have substantial interests at stake. We are concerned that continued delays in Alaska are pushing the date when these reserves can help provide relief to consumers into the indefinite future, directly or indirectly harming a large population of the country.

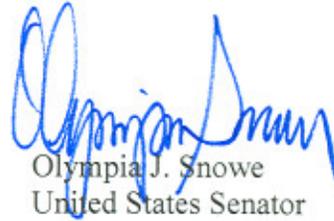
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Congress should fully investigate this matter. We commend the hard work you both have done, and continue to do to secure America's energy future. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Tom Harkin  
United States Senator



Olympia J. Snowe  
United States Senator