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## **Sen. Murkowski: Roadless Rule Makes No Sense for Alaska** *Introduces Bill Exempting Tongass, Chugach National Forests from Roadless Rule*

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, introduced legislation Tuesday to exempt Alaska’s national forests from the roadless rule to ensure that affected communities can economically develop renewable energy and other natural resources on the national forests in Alaska.

“The Forest Service’s application of the roadless rule in the Tongass and Chugach National Forests continues to deny local communities the opportunity to develop their economies and access more affordable energy,” said Murkowski, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Reinstatement in 2013 of the roadless rule – which prohibits construction of new roads in inventoried unroaded areas – has made efforts to build renewable energy projects, electric transmission lines, mining operations, wood products, and other projects within Alaska’s two national forests nearly impossible because of the lack of access.

Murkowski has repeatedly pressed U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell to allow Alaska flexibility in how the roadless rule is applied in the state. Despite repeated promises, though, the Forest Service has made little effort to be more flexible in its application of the roadless rule.

Murkowski’s legislation (S. 631) restores the 2003 Alaska roadless exemption that recognized that this “one size fits all” rule should not apply to Alaska’s national forests.

“The roadless rule may make sense in the Lower 48, where there are existing roads and utility lines on national forest lands, but in Alaska – where there is very little, if any, existing infrastructure – it simply makes no sense and is actually counterproductive. Our inability to access to our abundant resources has meant a bleak economic future for many communities,” Murkowski said. “It’s time for that to end. The legislation I’ve introduced allows Alaskans the opportunity to make thoughtful decisions about developing the economic resources on the forested lands that, in many cases, surrounds them on all sides.”

Alaska’s two national forests are the country’s largest. The Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska covers 17 million acres, an area the size of West Virginia. The Chugach National Forest covers 5.4 million acres.

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