



United States Senate Committee on

Energy & Natural Resources



Senator Lisa Murkowski, Alaska, *Chairman*

Opening Statement
Hearing on U.S. Crude Oil Export Policy
Chairman Lisa Murkowski
March 19, 2015

Welcome to members of the Committee. Welcome to our panelists, and to those who have come to listen and to hear the discussion on U.S. crude oil export policy. It's good to have the discussion in front of this Committee. It's clearly a very timely topic.

More than a year has passed since January 2014 when this Committee, under Chairman Wyden, held its first hearing in over a decade on crude oil exports. Since then the Congress has held an additional five hearings. That's moving right along, which is good to know. Today's hearing is, therefore, the 7th we have held in just over a year. This represents substantial progress on the education front.

When I first had the opportunity to bring up the issue of oil exports and the need to reexamine our policy here in this country with the current export ban, it felt like I was a pretty lonely voice out in the wilderness. But I made a clear effort initially to say that this was going to be about education. This was not about moving legislation through that was not thoughtful and considered – this was about education and an awareness effort.

We have seen analysis from the Government Accountability Office, Brookings Institution, Heritage Foundation, Council on Foreign Relations, Center for Strategic & International Studies, Cato Institute, Aspen Institute, Center for American Progress, Congressional Budget Office, Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy, Resources for the Future, Center for a New American Security, Peterson Institute for International Economics, ICF International, IHS, NERA, and more. The vast majority of this analysis ends up in the same place. It's important that we understand that, but we also need to hear the other side. The U.S. Energy Information Administration has also published three reports as part of the "dynamic and ongoing" analysis I requested with last year, and is due to release some final pieces very soon.

But when I mentioned last year that 2014 would be the year of the report, it seems clear to me that it was exactly that. These various institutions, these thought leaders engaged in that willingly and with a certain amount of energy, which was good.

The year of the report is coming to an end. While I continue to believe the administration retains extensive authority, explicitly delegated to it by previous Congresses in statute, it is also appropriate for us to consider our legislative options. So... just stay tuned here.

Before I turn to Ranking Member Cantwell, I would like to introduce into the record a statement we received from Michele Flournoy, who is the former Undersecretary for Policy at the Department of Defense under President Obama, from 2009 to 2012. Our schedule, unfortunately, did not permit her attendance, but there is one brief quotation from her important statement:

“Lifting oil export restrictions will yield a variety of security dividends to the United States... Market conditions merit such a step, and security dividends will not be fully realized without it.”

She goes further into her statement to speak about the significant security benefits associated with lifting oil export restrictions, and our flexibility then as a nation to impose energy sanctions into the future.

The national security side of the equation will be an extremely important part of this conversation going forward. I would look forward to comments from individuals as you present this morning, not only in this area but on other aspects of this policy consideration that we have in front of us.

Again, thank you all for being here. I look forward to your testimony this morning.

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