

Opening Statement
Sen. Lisa Murkowski
Legislative Hearing on S. 783
May 7, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for scheduling this hearing. I won't take a lot of time, because I want to get to the witnesses who have agreed to share their expertise with the Committee, but I do want to make a few quick observations.

First, as a practical consequence of current law, we only have until October to get this legislation to the President for signature. It is important that we meet that deadline by reporting a bill from this Committee, letting the full Senate to consider our work, reconciling any differences with the House, and allowing both Chambers to consider the result.

Second, I was surprised to see so many critical statements about the House's decision to debate and advance their own helium legislation two weeks ago. Clearly, there are other pressing issues to consider, but I believe that moving legislation on a small but important issue – even as we continue to debate the larger and more divisive ones – reflects well on Congress as a whole. The Floor is not just a place to have disagreements. It is also a place to take up legislation that we can agree on, as the House now has, on helium.

I want everyone to know that Chairman Wyden and I appreciate the urgency here, and we will work with leadership to advance the bill in a timely way. In the process, I hope we can remind everyone that regular order works and is the process most likely to result in sound policymaking.

Lastly, and on a slightly lighter note, let me say that advancing this bill will lift a weight off the shoulders of many sectors that rely upon helium. This is a noble effort that can float above the partisan fray. We should all rise in support of it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to hearing from the witnesses.