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October 22, 2015

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

This year has seen a flurry of legislative activity aimed at repealing the outdated restrictions on exporting oil produced in the United States. These efforts were bolstered in September when the Energy Information Administration concluded that lifting the de facto ban would not raise domestic gasoline prices. In my opinion, such a significant policy shift would conform to the principles laid out in the President's National Security Strategy and the Administration's Quadrennial Energy Review.

The Administration's failure to approve all oil exports to Mexico on the same basis as exports to Canada are authorized constitutes a missed opportunity for rare bipartisan action that would enhance North American energy security, even if cross-border flows would likely be limited in present market conditions. Markets, after all, can change. It is unfortunate the Administration chose inaction over forward thinking.

However, I welcomed the Department of Commerce's announcement in August that it would be "acting favorably" on license applications related to cross-border exchanges or "swapping" oil produced in the United States for oil produced in Mexico. I called for such action in early 2014 and joined with several colleagues in doing so again in February 2015. As you know, such transactions are already fully permissible under existing law.

I am troubled though by conflicting information that has emerged in recent weeks concerning these oil exchanges. Despite great fanfare in the press, there are indications that no such transactions may have actually been approved. I would greatly appreciate clarification on this issue. To date, has the Commerce Department approved any oil "swaps" with Mexico? If so, please provide the dates when such transactions were approved. If none have been finalized, please provide an explanation for the delay, along with an anticipated timeframe for the Administration to take final action.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator