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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6175

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September 25, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

Your statements yesterday at the United Nations General Assembly in New York City are frustrating on several fronts, particularly your commitment that the United States “will ensure the free flow of energy” from the Middle East and Africa. At a time when America’s economy is suffering, our focus should be on creating domestic jobs and accessing our own resources and those of our close allies rather than diverting our efforts and focus to imports from foreign and often hostile trading partners.

Both the production of traditional domestic energy sources and the imports from neighboring friendly nations have been stymied under the entirety of your Administration. Our close trading partner and neighbor, Canada, has been perpetually thwarted by you and your Department of State in their efforts to ensure the “free flow” of energy between our two countries via pipeline. Coastal states have been blocked from increasing production offshore that would contribute to the “free flow” of domestic energy, and energy production on onshore federal lands continues to decline as your Environmental Protection Agency and Interior Department block the “free flow” of these energy resources.

Despite a domestic boom in oil and gas production on state and private lands, according to your own Energy Information Administration (EIA), natural gas production on federal lands is at a ten year low, and oil production on federal land fell in fiscal years 2011 and 2012. Crude oil and lease condensate production on Federal lands was 18 percent lower in fiscal year 2012. In a recent report by the non-partisan Congressional Research Service using EIA data, CRS stated “All of the increased [oil] production from FY2007 to FY2012 took place on non-federal lands” and in that same time natural gas production on federal lands fell by 33 percent while production on state and private lands grew by 40 percent.

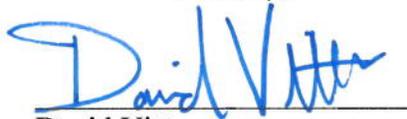
Your continued focus on foreign and often Middle Eastern resources above our own is baffling. On multiple occasions, you and members of your Administration have both applauded and even publically requested foreign nations for their increase in oil production during times of domestic economic recession. In March of 2011, in a trip to Latin America, you voiced your desire to assist the Brazilian government "with technology and support" in developing its offshore oil reserves and exclaimed that “when you're ready to start selling, we want to be one of your best customers.” Just one month later in an effort to secure a greater supply of oil you were

quoted as saying, "We are in a lot of conversations with the major oil producers like Saudi Arabia to let them know that it's not going to be good for them if our economy is hobbled because of high oil prices." Almost a year later, in March of 2012, facing the potential threat of gasoline supply disruption, your Energy Secretary Steven Chu said your Administration was "very grateful" for Saudi Arabia's willingness to increase their oil production for our benefit.

Mr. President, I couldn't agree more that high oil prices are bad for our economy, but I strongly suggest that you focus your efforts on increasing domestic oil production in places like the Gulf of Mexico and off the Atlantic Coast, areas you are charged with managing, rather than continuously asking foreign nations for help. Particularly as regions of the world such as the Middle East grown more unstable under your watch. Unfortunately, despite your rhetoric espousing your Administration's desire to keep oil prices down, your policies have had the polar opposite effect for most Americans. Just last week AAA announced that – with your Administration at the helm – gas prices reached the dubious milestone of having been over \$3 per gallon for the 1,000th consecutive day.

As I have said before, the federal government should be doing whatever it can to prioritize the creation of American jobs through domestic energy production in a truly "all of the above" approach. Your Administration's regulations have only served to slow down and obstruct the long-term success of American-grown energy, and your proclivity for funneling taxpayer resources to non-economically viable projects frequently run by political allies has done a severe disservice to our nation's citizens. The deliberate effort by your Administration to prevent North American energy independence has readily facilitated the need for additional energy exports and foreign policy involvement in regions like the Middle East and Africa. For the sake of American workers, consumers, our domestic economy, and our national security, I respectfully request you change course and focus the resources of your office and the entire federal government on pro-growth policies at home that allow us access to domestic and North American energy rather than aiding to our further reliance on the "free flow" of oil from Africa and the Middle East.

Sincerely,



David Vitter
Ranking Member
Environment and Public Works