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November 11, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Mail Stop 7229
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

I read with interest – and concern – your announcement that you are fast-tracking several renewable energy projects. Our interest derives from the fact that the oil and natural gas industry is one of the world's largest producers of renewable energy, including wind, geothermal and solar. In fact, more than one-fifth of all the U.S. investments made in renewable energy from 2000 to 2008 have been made by the oil and natural gas industry.

Our concern, however, is that despite continued promise to promote increased domestic oil and natural gas production to meet the nation's increasing demand for all forms of energy, government action that would accomplish that gets no fast-track treatment. In fact, when it comes to new oil and gas development, the administration's policy appears to be one of extreme caution, often leading to delay.

Perhaps the most recent glaring example involves the slowness of the department in developing a programmatic environmental impact statement (EIS) critical for Atlantic offshore development. Without that document – which Congress has now directed MMS to conduct – there can be no seismic testing, which is indispensable to the information-gathering that the department has deemed essential to successful planning and future leasing. Although we understand that an EIS may finally be authorized in the near future, we still must wonder why it has taken almost a year since MMS announced it would prepare the document.

Other examples include decisions to delay or defer lease sales in Utah, Colorado and Wyoming and a six-month delay in the next (2010-2015) OCS Five-Year Lease Plan. Despite overwhelmingly pro-development comments that we understand were submitted to MMS, we continue to see no movement on this Plan. We also see a lack of action on the Virginia lease sale – which is estimated to have a potential benefit of \$340 million – under the current Five-Year Plan. We are continuously being told that MMS needs more information but little or nothing is done to gather the needed information.

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We continue to believe that more oil and natural gas development is necessary and is good for the nation. And, according to the Department of Energy, even with significant expansion of renewables, we will still need to rely on oil and gas to fuel our economy for decades to come. Increased development also means greater energy security and billions of dollars in government revenue. And it would create more good jobs for our still-fragile economy. Sound policy is necessary to both maintain and add to the more than nine millions jobs for which oil and gas is responsible.

The oil and natural gas industry also is creating new green jobs through its investments in zero- and low-carbon technologies. Between 2000 and 2008, the industry has invested \$58 billion in these technologies, more than the federal government and more than all other industries combined. That is something we should not lose sight of as policymakers seek new ways to bring down the nation's high unemployment rate (Majority Leader Reid said yesterday that he plans to introduce jobs legislation next year).

Again, we applaud your move to fast-track alternative energy projects, and we would ask that you apply this same approach to actions needed to develop our primary domestic energy source – oil and natural gas. We are eager to understand what else you believe the industry can do to meet our nation's future energy needs and create additional well-paying jobs. We stand ready to do our part.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Gerard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jack Gerard

cc: Wilma Lewis
Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management
Department of the Interior

Ms. S. Elizabeth Birnbaum
Director
Minerals Management Service