

Mark Begich for U.S. Senate

September 8, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell:

As the Senate comes back into session this week, I urge you to put aside partisan politics and move forward on an energy package that provides short term relief for consumers and long term hope to America's working families.

Although gas prices have decreased slightly over the last month, Alaskans still face the highest gas prices in the country, reaching more than \$6.00 a gallon in some of Alaska's rural hub communities. Combined with skyrocketing home heating fuel prices, Alaskans are facing an energy crisis that is crippling many communities and stretching pocketbooks. Hospitals, schools, and businesses are also making tough budgetary decisions to cover record electricity bills. The small village of Akiachak had to gut its educational budget by \$800,000 to cover rising expenses.

American families need action now from Congress and the president to bring short term relief from these high energy prices. Too many Americans will not be able to fill their home heating fuel tanks in coming months if Congress does not take action. Specifically, I encourage the Senate to:

- Increase funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program by an extra \$2.5 billion,
- Clamp down on oil market speculation and prevent price gouging by producers and distributors,
- Release 70 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve,
- Double tax credits for energy-efficiency home improvements, and
- Allow employers to create pre-tax flexible spending accounts for transportation costs.

I also urge you to take steps now to move our country toward long-term energy solutions that increase domestic renewable and non-renewable energy supplies and help families and communities cut energy costs. This package should include:

- Open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to responsible oil and gas development,
- Accelerate leasing in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska,

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Paid for by Alaskans for Begich

The Honorable Harry Reid and Mitch McConnell

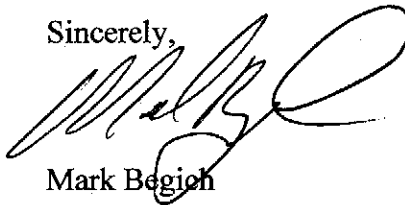
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- Create incentives and deadlines for oil and gas producers with federal leases to develop the leases quickly to help supply the Alaska natural gasline,
- Create a national Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan Fund to retrofit public buildings with energy efficient technology and offer low-interest loans to public utilities to help buy down their debt if they transition to more efficient and renewable generation, and
- Build the new energy workforce through federal support for vocational education programs that train workers to construct, operate and maintain renewable energy generation plants and transmission systems.

There are many more steps that Congress should take to secure America's energy future, but these steps can and should be taken in the near term to help American families and communities. I strongly encourage the Senate to take bipartisan action on these issues before you adjourn for the year in October.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Begich', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Begich