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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-3602

January 7, 2010

The Hon. Ken Salazar  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C. Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing in response to your announcement of new policies for oil and natural gas leasing on federal lands in 2010. I am deeply disturbed by this administration's continued hypocrisy with regards to American energy policy. Your policy changes not only violate federal law, a law which you and President Obama both voted for in the Senate, but they are also inconsistent with the administration's stated goals for an American energy policy that provides more jobs and strengthens national security.

These policies will only serve to restrict access to energy resources on federal lands, which an overwhelming majority of Americans would like to see utilized. In 2008, we witnessed an emotional response from the American people in their desire to see more domestic energy production, less dependence on enemy nations, and lower energy prices.

There has already been a dramatic reduction in leases issued by the Department of the Interior, 40 percent fewer in the western states. We have also seen over a 90 percent reduction in revenue from oil and gas lease sales in 2009 compared with the previous year. Efforts to create additional hurdles such as limiting the use of categorical exclusions, which Congress specifically mandated in the Energy Policy Act of 2005, will significantly undermine the ability of independent producers to utilize these important, common-sense tools.

Within the House Natural Resources Committee, I am constantly reminded why decisions relating to the development of natural resources are always best made at the local level. Developing a master leasing plan under the stewardship of yet another disassociated, Washington-based regulatory team will only create potential for litigation and protest on every oil and gas lease issued by the agency. This top-down approach will add greater bureaucracy and costly delays to an industry so critical to our nation and our future.

Natural gas is without question the cleanest, most affordable American fuel we have. Thanks to new technologies, we can produce it in abundance if provided the access, but the benefits reach far beyond the tangible commodity. Its greatest contribution undoubtedly comes in the form of jobs -- high-paying, stable, American jobs. Currently, millions of Americans are employed by the oil and gas industry, earning, on average, \$45 an hour -- over \$93,000 a year -- or double the national average estimate of jobs created by so-called "green investment." Moreover, the revenue you are

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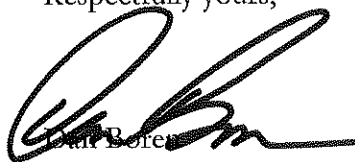
impeding from oil and gas leasing is the largest contributor to the national treasury after income tax. To stifle the growth of this industry in the midst of record-setting national deficit and unemployment levels is not only outrageous, but irresponsible.

It is impossible to stand by silently while these job-killing proposals further hinder our efforts toward energy independence and have devastating effects on families and small businesses across the nation. It is also naive for anyone, including the industry's critics, to argue that oil and natural gas will not be the integral bridge that connects our current energy economy to the future.

Why do policy-makers within the administration deny the connection between your so-called American energy "kings of the world" and the millions of American jobs they provide? The companies affected by these reforms are not global corporate conglomerates. Rather, they are smaller, independent producers that drill 90 percent of the wells in the U.S. struggling to stay alive in this dwindling economy. To these companies, and the people behind them whose blood, sweat, and tears have helped to build this country, statements such as your "kings of the world" comment are a profound affront.

I respectfully request that you reconsider these policy initiatives and reevaluate the harmful rhetoric you continue to use when discussing our nation's energy industry and the millions of hard-working Americans it employs. Instead, respect the legacy of those who laid the foundation of our nation's prosperity and work with the American energy industry on policies that will complement our national objectives, while preserving these critical jobs.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lou Barletta", written over a faint printed name.

Member of Congress