United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 11, 2012

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

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your leadership on Arctic issues as demonstrated by your Administration's active participation in the 2011 Arctic Council ministerial in Nuuk, Greenland, the finalization of the Council's Arctic Search and Rescue protocol, and ongoing work toward a multilateral cooperative agreement on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic. Senate ratification of the Law of the Sea is another important step to take full advantage of future opportunities in the Arctic and the Administration's strong support of ratification in testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee is greatly appreciated.

As you know, U.S. Arctic policy was updated and strengthened in January, 2009, with the signing of National Security Presidential Directive 66 (NSPD-66) and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 25 (HSPD-25). Since then, that policy has advanced in a less than organized fashion, with multiple federal agencies creating their own departmental policies, roadmaps, and vision and strategy statements to help guide future development. We think it is now time to take the next step in this policy development: creation of an overall national U.S. strategy for the Arctic.

The United States is the only Arctic nation which lacks such a formal strategy which ties together all the individual agency policies and visions. Developing an American Arctic strategy is especially timely now, with the hope for offshore oil and gas exploration in Alaska's Arctic this summer, the number of cargo ships transiting the Bering Strait are increasing to new record highs and America's indigenous peoples are justifiably concerned with the impacts of these developments and changing conditions on their subsistence way of life.

The national strategies of other nations identify future Arctic needs and priority areas, and specific implementation goals and objectives. These areas include exercising national sovereignty and strengthening multilateral cooperation; increasing knowledge

about changing climate and its impacts; promoting development of energy, marine resources and other business opportunities; needs for infrastructure, vessel monitoring and tracking systems, and maritime safety systems; and addressing the cultural and subsistence needs of indigenous peoples of the region.

Finalization of NSPD-66/HSPD-25 was an important step in advancing our nation's Arctic policy. The work done since by various departments, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Interior, the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard, and others have broadened application of this policy. Development of a comprehensive national Arctic strategy would be a logical and needed extension of this work and be a lasting legacy of your Administration's leadership on Arctic issues.

We pledge the support of our offices to work with you on its development and finalization. We ask that the State of Alaska have a meaningful role in the process, possibly through their participation in the Arctic Policy Group.

Thank you again for your leadership on the Arctic and the many other security and economic challenges facing our nation.

Sincerely,

Mark Begich
United States Senator

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

CC:
Secretary of State
Secretary of Interior
Secretary of Defense
Secretary of Energy
Secretary of Commerce
Secretary of Homeland Security