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Sen. Murkowski: Alaska Will Greatly Benefit from Bipartisan Energy and Natural Resources Bill

Promotes Energy Production, Resource Stewardship, Innovation and Infrastructure

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, this week introduced S. 1460, the *Energy and Natural Resources Act of 2017* (ENRA), as the successor to her broad, bipartisan bill from the last Congress. This new measure will help Alaskans produce more energy, pay less for energy, facilitate needed infrastructure, boost the innovation of new technologies, and protect sportsmen’s access to federal lands—all without raising taxes or adding to the deficit.

“This new bill encompasses a wide range of Alaska priorities for energy, resource, innovation, infrastructure, and land management policies,” Murkowski said. “It will allow us to tap into more of our world-class mineral base, remove hurdles to the gasoline, expand the use of hydropower and other renewables, reauthorize critical programs that provide vital funding, boost Alaska Native energy development, increase sportsmen’s access to federal lands, and protect against natural hazards. This is a bill written by and with Alaskans, for the benefit of our whole state, and I’m eager to work with my colleagues to move it forward.”

The bill builds on the *Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015*, which included priorities from 80 Senators and passed the Senate with 85 votes. While that bill fell just short in a bicameral conference with the House of Representatives at the end of last year, it provided an excellent starting point for Murkowski’s bipartisan efforts in this Congress.

Murkowski worked with Republican Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to add S. 1460 directly to the Senate Calendar so that it can be brought up for debate before the full Senate on an expedited basis.

Murkowski is the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Attached to this release is a list of the provisions in S. 1460 that will benefit Alaska.

Provisions That Will Benefit Alaska In S. 1460, the *Energy and Natural Resources Act*

Mineral Security – Reduces America’s dependence on foreign suppliers of minerals that are critical to defense, manufacturing, and other vital industries. Substantive permitting reforms, a renewed emphasis on geological surveying, and related steps will help Alaskans responsibly produce more of our world-class mineral base without suffering needless project delays.

Hydropower – Ensures federal permitting decisions for new projects and relicensing are made in a timely manner to reduce unnecessary delays and costs; requires agencies to use existing studies and data and to avoid duplication; and prohibits the USDA delegation of 4(e) conditioning authority other than to the Chief of the Forest Service or the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. These reforms will help improve the viability of hydropower projects for dozens of towns across Alaska.

Sportsmen’s – Requires federal agencies to expand and enhance sportsmen’s opportunities on federal lands, makes “open unless closed” the standard for Forest Service and BLM lands, restores Second Amendment rights on Army Corps recreational lands, and clarifies procedures for commercial filming on federal lands. Many of these provisions are drawn from Senator Murkowski’s bipartisan Sportsmen’s Act.

Alaska Gasline – Provides routing flexibility through the non-wilderness section of Denali National Park and Preserve to protect the park, reduce development costs, and remove a major hurdle for the job-creating gasline project.

Liquefied Natural Gas Permitting – Requires the Secretary of Energy to make a decision on any LNG export application within 45 days of completion of environmental review. This will help ensure that Alaska’s efforts to market its stranded natural gas can proceed in a timely manner without undue delay.

State Loan Eligibility – Clarifies that the Department of Energy may provide loan guarantees to states such as Alaska to support efforts to deploy new energy systems and efficiency improvements. This will allow the state to continue its work to reduce the high cost of energy and create more sustainable economies throughout rural Alaska.

Microgrids – Facilitates the development of hybrid microgrids for isolated communities, including the integration of renewable resources in rural communities that currently rely on diesel, and promotes the kind of research being conducted at the University of Alaska’s Center for Energy and Power in Fairbanks.

Volcanoes – Creates the National Volcano and Early Monitoring System to standardize and modernize the network of volcano monitors across Alaska. This system will feature a national, continuously staffed office to monitor volcanoes, including the active Bogoslof volcano in the Aleutian Islands.

Landslides – Establishes the National Landslide Hazards Reduction Program, which will allow federal agencies to work with states and Indian tribes to map, assess, and minimize threats posed by landslides. This is critical to the protection of life and property in high-risk landslide areas such as Sitka.

3D Elevation Mapping – Formally establishes the 3D Elevation Program (also known as “3DEP”), which will facilitate elevation mapping efforts through entities like the Alaska Mapping Executive Committee that are working to collect elevation data for 100 percent of the state.

Weatherization Assistance – Reauthorizes the program so that Alaska will continue to receive funding to improve the energy efficiency of low-income families’ homes. The program supports hundreds of jobs across Alaska and has substantially reduced energy costs for thousands of residents.

State Energy Program (SEP) – Continues the program to ensure that Alaska will continue to receive funding to invest in energy efficiency, renewable energy, energy emergency preparedness, and other priorities. SEP funding allows the state to leverage energy-related programs across Alaska.

Energy Innovation – Extends a range of successful research programs at the Department of Energy that are important to the development of new technologies and that will ultimately help provide cleaner and more affordable energy for Alaska communities.

Methane Hydrates – Reauthorizes federal research at Prudhoe Bay to continue the development of Alaska’s vast resources of frozen methane hydrates, which have significant promise as an abundant, secure, and long-lasting source of American energy.

Geothermal Energy – Extends federal research efforts critical to the development of Alaska’s geothermal resources, which could benefit up to one-fourth of the communities in the state.

Marine Hydrokinetic – Reauthorizes research to advance the development of electricity from ocean and river currents, tides, and waves. This will help advance demonstration projects showcasing new technologies like those proposed at Igiugig, Yakutat, and at False Pass.

Energy Efficiency – Facilitates a range of voluntary programs and common sense contracting authorities to improve the efficiency of everything from schools and buildings to the appliances we put in our homes. This will help reduce energy consumption and energy costs for families and businesses across Alaska.

Terror Lake Hydroelectric Project – Authorizes the expansion of the Terror Lake project in Kodiak. This will allow Kodiak and the largest Coast Guard base in the United States to continue to receive reliable, emissions-free energy.

Mahoney Lake Hydroelectric Project – Authorizes a stay of the hydroelectric license for the Mahoney Lake project in Ketchikan. This will allow the Southeast Alaska Power Association (SEAPA) to consider this renewable project for up to ten additional years. If the stay is lifted within that timeframe, the licensees will have an additional six years to begin project construction.

Swan Lake Hydroelectric Project – Directs the Bureau of Land Management to correct a survey error and convey up to 25.8 additional acres of land to SEAPA to expand the Swan Lake dam reservoir and generate additional electricity to power Ketchikan and Southeast Alaska.

Diesel Emissions – Renews the federal program that provides funding to reduce diesel emissions, including in remote communities that generate their own electricity. In recent years, this program has helped replace and repower older diesel engines used in the power plants of a number of rural Alaska communities.

BLM Coordination With States – Directs BLM to coordinate with state agencies – like the Alaska Department of Natural Resources – on land management plans affecting oil and natural gas production to ensure the federal government takes into account Alaska’s proven record of safe, responsible production.

Jay S. Hammond Wilderness – Renames the 2.6 million acres of existing wilderness within Lake Clark National Park and Preserve to honor the late Governor Jay Hammond and commemorate his homestead on Lake Clark.

Federal Land Management – Establishes a single inventory of federal property and land. With the federal government controlling more than 60 percent of Alaska, a consolidated federal inventory will ensure that agencies can better identify and prioritize environmental cleanups, land utilization, and land transfers.

Geomatic Mapping – Requires federal agencies to consider environmental data collected remotely, such as through remote sensing or aerial surveys. This is particularly important for Alaska, as remote projects are often difficult and expensive to survey from the ground or in-person.

Office of Indian Energy – Renews the Department of Energy’s Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs, which provides assistance for tribes and Alaska Native communities for projects focused on energy development, affordability, and electrification.

E-Prize Competition Pilot Program – Authorizes the Secretary of Energy to establish a prize competition for entities to develop and verifiably demonstrate technologies that reduce the cost of electricity or space heat in high-cost regions by at least 25 percent. This is a novel way to promote energy affordability that will help reduce rural energy costs across the state.

Grid Storage – Directs the Department of Energy to conduct research to advance grid storage technology. This will improve the efficiency and affordability of power delivery for rural communities that are not connected to larger power systems, and could boost storage projects that are already underway in communities like Kotzebue and Kodiak.

Nuclear – Provides the Department of Energy with authority to facilitate collaboration needed to bring advanced reactor concepts to market. These concepts could provide reliable, always-on, long-term solutions for Alaska communities, mining operations, military installations, and other sites.

Energy Workforce – Helps build a strong workforce in Alaska to ensure continued resource production well into the future by instructing the Secretary of Energy to set up a job training pilot program.

Grid Reliability – Requires agencies to consider the reliability impacts of a proposed rule before it is adopted. The reliability of energy systems is essential to protecting the lives and property of Alaskans and this provision will help ensure that federal regulators act in our state’s best interests.

Code Maintenance – Cleans up the U.S. Code by repealing dozens of the Department of Energy’s redundant, overlapping, and outdated authorities. This will help ensure that federal activities align with Alaska’s current priorities, not obsolete instructions from decades past.

**Murkowski’s Alaska Mental Health Trust Land Exchange Act is not included in the Energy and Natural Resources Act because it was signed into law as part of the Fiscal Year 2017 Omnibus Appropriations bill.*

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