

Opening Statement – Senator Lisa Murkowski
Natural Gas Roundtable – Domestic Supply and Exports
May 21, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for scheduling this roundtable on natural gas domestic supply and export issues. I have heard good things about last week's roundtable on infrastructure and transportation, and I'm sorry I had to miss it. And, thanks to all of you for your willingness to participate today – to share your views and answer questions on these important issues. Since the purpose of these roundtables is to hear from you, I'll keep my opening statement short.

Estimates of U.S. natural gas supplies and production continue to increase. According to EIA's most recent data, proved reserves of U.S. natural gas in 2010 rose by the highest amount ever recorded since this data was first published in 1977. EIA's 2013 Annual Energy Outlook reference case forecasts a 44-percent increase in natural gas production over the next 30 years, mostly due to shale gas production – which is projected to grow by over 100-percent during this time period.

The shale gas boom is real and the information I've seen leads me to believe these trends will continue far into the future. In fact, just last month, the USGS announced a nearly threefold increase in mean natural gas and natural gas liquids resources in the Bakken and Three Forks formation over 2008 levels.

Advances in technology – the combined use of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing – have allowed us to access natural gas resources thought impossible to develop only a few years ago. Natural gas is now an abundant, affordable and clean source of energy providing great opportunities for economic growth and energy security in our country – and overseas.

Various reports and studies continue to show – and EIA projects – surpluses in domestic natural gas supplies – above and beyond what we need at home – available for export. This is not a new concept. We've been exporting natural gas to Mexico by pipeline for decades – and at record levels in 2012. Until just this spring, LNG had been exported from Alaska to Japan for over 40 years – always on time, and without incident.

I'm pleased the Department of Energy is moving forward under its existing authorities to approve LNG export license applications. It's my hope that last week's decision on Freeport is the first of many projects that will be approved in the coming weeks and months – not years. The decision clearly shows that the Department's review process is deliberative, impartial and thorough – though greater certainty should be provided so we can press our advantage in world markets.

The vast majority of independent analyses conducted over the past year have found that exports overwhelmingly benefit the economy. And, ultimately, market forces will serve to limit the number of export facilities that actually get built. We simply cannot afford to needlessly drag our feet on exports, or we're going to let real economic development opportunities, and the chance to provide our allies access to an abundant, affordable and clean source of energy, slip through our fingers.

I'm looking forward to hearing from all of you on these issues and your thoughts on impacts to the U.S. economy and the industries you represent. There is a wealth of knowledge in this room. With that, I turn to you. Thank you again for your time this morning.