

May 24, 2011

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE:

The undersigned organizations thank Sen. Murkowski for her leadership on critical minerals issues and we urge you to cosponsor the forthcoming “Critical Minerals Policy Act of 2011,” which Sen. Murkowski is expected to introduce in the near term.

It is imperative to the American business community that critical minerals remain available and affordable. This need cannot be understated.

Critical minerals, which include titanium, lithium, molybdenum, rare earth elements, and many others, are vital to U.S. economic growth; they are the basic building blocks of modern manufactured products. They are crucial to many industries, including the agriculture, defense, aerospace, infrastructure, electronics, renewable energy, energy conservation, and auto sectors.

The United States has abundant reserves of many of these minerals and was in recent decades a leader in critical mineral production. This leadership role has become seriously undermined. For example, the U.S. has dropped from first place to last place among major rare earths producers. China is now the dominant player in this market.

A growing reliance on foreign critical mineral reserves is creating a significant potential strategic vulnerability. For example, China announced a major reduction in rare earths exports, which has rippled through the supply chain. Meanwhile, attempts in the United States to revive rare earth production will churn slowly through a permitting process that has been ranked as the lengthiest in the world.

We believe Congress and the Administration must place a greater priority on domestic critical mineral production. Sen. Murkowski’s forthcoming legislation is an important step toward this goal.

We expect that the Critical Minerals Policy Act would set forth a path to identify issues that are limiting the ability of U.S. firms to domestically produce critical minerals, and create a policy for critical minerals to ensure that the U.S. is able to meet future needs for the minerals that are a fundamental part of the U.S. economy.

We once again commend Sen. Murkowski for seeking to address the critical minerals issue, and we urge you to cosponsor the Critical Minerals Policy Act.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers
American Foundry Society
IPC — Association Connecting Electronics Industries

National Black Chamber of Commerce
National Electrical Manufacturers Association
National Mining Association
National Venture Capital Association
New Mexico Business Coalition
New Mexico Utility Shareholders Alliance
North American Die Casting Association
Northwest Mining Association
Odney
Texas Association of Business
The Fertilizer Institute
United States Magnetic Materials Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce