

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 2, 2021

The Honorable Debra Haaland  
Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

In light of the U.S. Western District Court of Louisiana's recent ruling on President Biden's federal oil and gas leasing ban, we ask that you immediately hold all postponed federal onshore oil and gas lease sales affected by Executive Order (E.O.) No. 14008. We also ask that you work with President Biden to fully rescind the leasing ban. Due to the E.O., all federal oil and gas lease sales in 2021 have been unilaterally and unlawfully postponed across the West. The Department is required by law to hold these lease sales on a quarterly basis, pursuant to the Mineral Leasing Act.<sup>1</sup>

Contrary to what the Biden Administration has repeatedly claimed, Judge Doughty of the Western District of Louisiana ruled that federal oil and gas plaintiff states are suffering immediate and irreparable harm due to the leasing ban. The postponed onshore lease sales have cost taxpayers nearly \$200 million, half of which is returned to the state in which the lease sale is held.<sup>2</sup> We cannot afford to lose such an important source of revenue. In the West, we rely on these revenues to fund K-12 education and other essential public services.

The call to resume federal oil and gas lease sales is bipartisan. Republican and Democratic Governors and Senators alike, from Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah, Montana, North Dakota, and Louisiana, continue to call for an end of this disastrous policy. Americans cannot afford a leasing ban.

During both your confirmation hearing and in your answers to questions for the record, you assured the Committee repeatedly that as Secretary you would "follow the law." We are encouraged by reports that "the Interior Department said it would comply with the ruling," and hold you to that commitment.<sup>3</sup>

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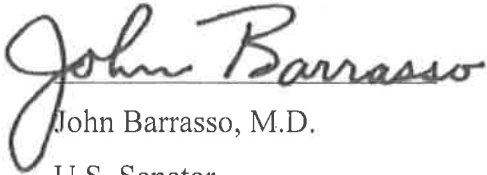
<sup>1</sup> 30 USC 226 (b)(1)(A)

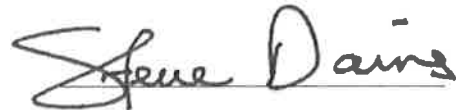
<sup>2</sup> From 2016-2020, onshore oil averaged \$383 million per year in lease sale proceeds (bonus bids), thus it is estimated that the two lost lease sales cost states about half of that revenue.


<sup>3</sup> U.S. judge orders resumption in federal drilling auctions in setback for Biden, Reuter Online, June 15, 2021. (<https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/us-judge-blocks-biden-pausing-oil-gas-lease-auctions-2021-06-15/>)


We would like for you to explain in writing how and when the Department will comply with the law and hold all postponed and future federal oil and gas lease sales affected by the leasing ban. We look forward to receiving your detailed response by July 16, 2021.


Sincerely,


  
John Barrasso, M.D.  
U.S. Senator


  
Steve Daines  
U.S. Senator

  
Kevin Cramer  
U.S. Senator

  
James Lankford  
U.S. Senator

  
John Hoeven  
U.S. Senator

  
Mitt Romney  
U.S. Senator

  
Roger Marshall, M.D.  
U.S. Senator

  
Cynthia Lummis  
U.S. Senator