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February 8, 2013

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of State! I look forward to working with you in your new capacity on many of the same issues we worked together on in the U.S. Senate including the ratification of the Convention on the Law of the Sea. Along those lines, I write to urge you to build upon the substantial progress Secretary Clinton achieved in the United States' engagement in the Arctic region, not just on Law of the Sea issues but in advancing U.S. leadership in a region that is just now developing methods of cooperation and collaboration, and defining national boundaries.

The Arctic is not presently subject to the type of long-standing disputes and entrenched views that make diplomatic activity in the region difficult, but it is an area that is starting to garner international attention and recognition of its tremendous economic potential. As a result, it is imperative that the United States take the lead in guiding international policy decisions in the Arctic. One avenue available to the United States is the Arctic Council.

Secretary Clinton became the first United States Cabinet member, along with Secretary of the Interior Salazar, to attend a ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council when she traveled to Nuuk, Greenland in 2011. I joined with them as the first US Senator to attend a meeting of the Arctic Council. As Iceland's Foreign Minister later told me, the United States might have been late to the party, but when it arrived it arrived in style. I encourage you to attend the next ministerial meeting in Kiruna, Sweden on May 15, 2013. At that meeting Canada will take over as Chair of the Arctic Council with the United States to become Chair in 2015. This is a tremendous opportunity to focus on the North American Arctic over the next four years and its economic and national security implications for the United States. With the level of activity within the Arctic Council ramping up in recent years, there are considerable expectations for the United States when it becomes Chair.

In addition, at the May meeting, there will be a determination on whether to accept the applications of a number of governments, including the European Union, China, Japan, India, South Korea, and Singapore, as permanent observers of the Arctic Council. This will be an

important discussion as the Arctic Council seeks to secure its role as the primary forum for Arctic cooperation and U.S. input will be crucial to resolving concerns among the Council's member nations.

With the United States scheduled to become Chair of the Arctic Council in just two years, I urge you to designate a senior political official to serve as the United States' Ambassador to the Arctic as well as prepare for the level of sustained commitment that will be needed to meet our obligations. I would like to work with you to ensure that the United States maintains its commitment to the Arctic and demonstrates leadership in this region. I welcome your thoughts on this matter and other ways to strengthen the United States' efforts in the Arctic.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator