Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 2, 2012

The Honorable Howard Gruenspecht
Acting Administrator, EIA
Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Acting Administrator Gruenspecht:

On Thursday, January 26, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) recalled its latest available data for oil and gas production on federal lands (Table 1.14 of the *Annual Energy Review 2010*). According to the agency's announcement, this was necessary because the data "were incorrectly extracted from another agency's data." We write to you today, more than one month later, to express concern with the length of time it has already taken EIA to fix this apparent error and to request that you make the revision of this data your agency's highest priority.

Despite our expectation that EIA's federal oil and gas production data would be corrected quickly, five weeks have now passed and the latest communication suggests that several more are still needed. This surprises us, to say the least. A trade publication and a small think tank – both with far less time, employees, and financial resources available to them – have both managed to conduct independent assessments of the same data over a much shorter period of time.

Adding to our concern is that EIA has rescinded this data at a time of rising gasoline prices, and therefore a time when Congress is more likely to debate and potentially enact energy-related legislation. Because supply plays a key role in determining the price of energy, it is critical for policymakers to understand the most recent production-related trends within federal control. For example, if oil production on federal lands is stagnant or falling – even as oil prices climb above $100 per barrel – that is something Congress needs to know with a degree of certainty.

Without access to reliable data, however, it will be impossible for Congress to make truly informed decisions about supply-related policies that could reduce both prices at the pump and our tremendously costly dependence on foreign oil. Without an understanding of the most recent production trends on federal lands, it is possible that inaccurate facts will lead to mistaken conclusions that ultimately weaken our nation's energy security.

A corollary concern is preserving EIA's integrity and reputation as an independent provider of energy data that can widely and safely be relied upon. Last summer, a well-respected group of energy experts drafted a letter of public support for EIA. It notes that, "Countless businesses, officials, and analysts – and many branches of the US government – rely on EIA's unbiased, comprehensive, timely data and analysis on US and global energy markets and industry

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trends." We agree. But the longer that known errors in EIA's data are allowed to persist, the more that standing is threatened. Whenever an error is found, it needs to be fixed immediately so that all who rely on EIA's data can do so with nothing less than full confidence.

We do not need a formal answer to this letter, but request you let our staff know when the revised data on federal oil and gas production will be available. We trust it will be in the very near future.

Sincerely,

Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Doc Hastings
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee