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United States Senate

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March 18, 2020

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

I write to you regarding the recent actions taken by Russia and Saudi Arabia to increase crude oil production when demand is commensurately low. Reportedly, these actions are being taken to distort energy markets and regain footing lost to U.S. oil producers, reversing the historic energy dominance and national security gains we have made.

Until recently, U.S. crude oil production was on the decline. This sent vast amounts of wealth overseas, but was also detrimental to the security of our Nation by making us dependent on foreign energy production. Private sector innovation and the right government policies have provided the course correction our nation needed, actually making us a net exporter of crude. However, foreign nations are now using the environment of the worldwide spread of COVID-19 to flood the market and cripple our domestic energy producers. Unfortunately, these bullying tactics by Russia have become the norm, but the actions of our close strategic partner Saudi Arabia are particularly concerning. Saudi leaders have long claimed to be a stabilizing force in world oil markets where the Kingdom, the U.S. and our allies are better off. However, these actions have set off elevated volatility and drastic price declines in oil markets. Whether Russia, Saudi Arabia or other OPEC producers, these actions are unacceptable.

The U.S. has a long history of taking action against oil market manipulations by state actors. Both Democratic (Jimmy Carter, 1979 with Iran) and Republican (Ronald Reagan, 1982 with Libya) administrations have taken Presidential action to embargo crude oil imports in the name of national security and support for domestic supply. While we support continued dialogue, we believe it is critical to take action now to avoid substantial domestic layoffs, displacement, and financial impacts.

I urge you to direct your Administration to take immediate action under the authorities granted to you, including Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, to embargo crude oil from Russia, Saudi Arabia, and other OPEC nations like Iraq. In 2018, the United States imported nearly 1.5 million barrels per day from the three aforementioned countries. Today, these same nations expect our producers and workers to absorb these impacts without recourse. We must send the immediate signal; the United States will not be bullied or taken for granted.

Sincerely,



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator