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Murkowski Delivers Keynote Address at TREM Conference

Calls for Energy Committee to Report Legislation to Update Federal Minerals Policy

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, today delivered the keynote address at the Technology and Rare Earth Metals (TREM) Center's 12th Annual Conference. The Senator's remarks highlighted the importance of domestic mineral production and the urgent need to update federal policies in this area.

"There is no question that a stable and affordable supply of minerals is critical to America's future competitiveness. And yet – despite that – our mineral-related capabilities have been slipping for decades," Murkowski said. "Rare earths garner most of the headlines, but we are 100 percent dependent on foreign sources of 17 other minerals and more than 50 percent dependent on foreign sources for some 25 more. For years, the government has been content to report on those facts – without doing much to change them."

To address this growing threat, and ensure the United States can develop its tremendous mineral base in a timely and environmentally responsible manner, Murkowski last year introduced the Critical Minerals Policy Act (S. 1113) along with 19 bipartisan cosponsors. The bill would provide programmatic direction to help keep the Unites States competitive and ensure that federal mineral policies – some of which have not been updated since the 1980s – are finally brought into the 21st century.

In June 2011, the Critical Minerals Policy Act received strong support during a legislative hearing. An administration witness testified that it would not weaken or waive any environmental statutes. Unfortunately, even after that hearing, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee still has not allowed the bill to be marked up, in part due to misperceptions about its permitting and resource assessment provisions. Murkowski expressed frustration over the

obstruction of her bill during her statement at the TREM Conference.

“What we should not do – and particularly in the case of minerals critical to our global competitiveness and national security – is subject mining projects to an unnecessarily long permitting process. Delaying projects, stranding capital, and allowing bureaucratic intransigence is not a strategy for environmental protection. To the contrary, it is a disingenuous and dangerous thing to do as the United States struggles to create private-sector jobs and attract long-term investment.”

Murkowski concluded her remarks by reminding the audience of the high stakes associated with critical mineral production.

“This is about strengthening our economy, creating jobs, attracting investment and competing with other nations around the world. This is an opportunity to help ensure that new products and technologies continue to bear the stamp that means so much to us: Made in the U.S.A.,” she said. “If we fail to act – if we fail to even consider legislation to address the very real challenges we face – it will be our own fault, and it will be to our own detriment.”

A PDF with the full text of the senator’s keynote address is attached.