

THE WHITE HOUSE  
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PRESIDENTIAL FINDING CONCERNING ALASKA NATURAL GAS

This Administration has been dedicated to encouraging free trade and to removing regulatory impediments that inhibit the development of our Nation's natural resources. Proven natural gas reserves in the Prudhoe Bay area of Alaska's North Slope represent approximately 15 percent of total U.S. gas reserves. In addition, undiscovered, recoverable supplies of natural gas from Alaska's North Slope may exceed 100 trillion cubic feet. There can be no doubt the development of Alaskan oil has played an important role in ensuring adequate energy supplies at reasonable prices for American consumers. I believe efficient development of Alaska natural gas will provide similar benefits. Leaving this resource undeveloped benefits no one.

Efficient development of Alaska natural gas on the basis of market financing could encompass the export of some of this gas to other countries. Because world energy markets are interrelated, our Nation will benefit from an enlarged international gas supply. Production of Alaska reserves will increase the amount of secure energy sources available at market prices and, thus, displace less secure or more expensive energy sources, including oil from the Persian Gulf.

Before Alaska natural gas can be exported to nations other than Canada or Mexico, Section 12 of the Alaska Natural Gas Transportation Act (15 U.S.C. 719j) requires me to find exportation "will not diminish the total quantity or quality nor increase the total price of energy available to the United States." In order to make this finding, it has been necessary to assess the relationship of Alaska natural gas to the U.S. energy market.

There exist adequate, secure, reasonably priced supplies of natural gas to meet the demand of American consumers for the foreseeable future. This demand can be met by lower-48 production and already-approved Canadian imports. If necessary, this demand also can be met at lower delivered energy cost by coal, oil, imported liquified natural gas (LNG), natural gas from Mexico, and other energy sources.

Given these facts, exports of Alaska natural gas would represent a judgment by the market that the energy demands of American consumers can be met adequately from other sources at comparable or lower prices. Exports of Alaska natural gas would not diminish the total quantity or quality of energy available to U.S. consumers because world energy resources would be increased and other more efficient supplies would thus be available. Finally, exports would not increase the price of energy available to consumers since increased availability of secure energy sources tends to stabilize or lower energy prices.

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Accordingly, I find that exports of Alaska natural gas in quantities in excess of 1,000 Mcf per day will not diminish the total quantity or quality nor increase the total price of energy available to the United States.

This finding removes the Section 12 regulatory impediment to Alaskan natural gas exports in a manner that allows any private party to develop this resource and sets up competition for this purpose. It is my belief that removal of this impediment to private sector development of Alaska's vast natural gas resources, using private sector resources with no government subsidy, will benefit our entire Nation.

This finding represents a determination that the effects of exports of Alaska natural gas on American consumers would comply with the market criteria of Section 12 in the context of current and projected future energy markets and that such exports would be consistent with our comprehensive energy policy. It does not assess the merits or feasibility of a particular project, but rather lets the marketplace undertake a realistic consideration of various options concerning Alaska natural gas. The operation of market forces is the best guarantee that Alaska natural gas will be developed efficiently and that there is an incentive to find additional reserves.

I do not believe this finding should hinder completion of the Alaska Natural Gas Transportation System (ANGTS). This Administration supports the timely, economic development of Alaskan natural resources. To this end the Administration has removed all regulatory barriers to the private sector's expeditious completion of this project. In particular, I want to reaffirm our support for the special regulatory treatment of the "prebuild" portion of ANGTS, including the minimum revenue stream guarantees.

This finding shall be published in the Federal Register.

RONALD REAGAN

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