Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 7, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing on behalf of our constituents – families, farmers, and businesses – who are suffering from a significant spike in propane prices this winter. In emergency situations, the law allows federal agencies to provide regulatory relief that will increase propane supply in areas with critical shortages, which is expected to lower costs. Also, federal assistance can be provided to states and communities to address this very serious situation. We ask you to identify and implement sensible strategies, provided by law, to guide federal agencies in assisting states with efforts to mitigate the effects of the current propane shortage. In particular, we ask you to review all available options to facilitate and enable the transportation of propane to areas with shortages, via interstate pipelines and other modes of transportation.

According to the Energy Information Administration (EIA), U.S. propane stocks have fallen far below the 5-year seasonal average. The most recent EIA report indicates that propane stocks are 24.0 million barrels lower than a year ago, a drop of 43.8%. As a result, in many areas, residential and wholesale propane prices have doubled, or even tripled, since October. Numerous factors, including extremely cold weather and transportation problems, have resulted in high usage, significant drawdowns, and low stocks. Now, more than twenty states have issued disaster declarations related to the propane shortage.

Homes, businesses, and farms desperately need propane, and the shortage threatens the safety of families and the financial stability of farms and businesses. Thankfully, propane suppliers are already responding to market forces and taking extraordinary steps to increase supplies in hard-hit areas. Until propane stocks recover, the government should continue to provide and/or expand short-term regulatory relief to incentivize these activities. We are pleased that several federal agencies, such as the Department of Transportation and the Department of Energy, have responded to the propane shortage by providing regulatory flexibility and assistance. We urge you to ensure the ongoing engagement of all relevant agencies, including the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and Human Services, the Small Business Administration, and others. We look forward to working with you to advance solutions to alleviate this propane shortage.

Sincerely,

John Boozman,
U.S. Senator

Mark Pryor,
U.S. Senator

John Hoeven,
U.S. Senator

Al Franken,
U.S. Senator

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Roy Blunt,
U.S. Senator

Richard J. Durbin,
U.S. Senator

Rob Portman,
U.S. Senator

Heidi Heitkamp,
U.S. Senator

Susan Collins,
U.S. Senator

Tom Harkin,
U.S. Senator

Dan Coats,
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Joe Donnelly,
U.S. Senator

Mark Kirk,
U.S. Senator

Michael F. Bennet,
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Roger Wicker,
U.S. Senator

Angus King,
U.S. Senator

John Thune,
U.S. Senator

Sherrod Brown,
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Chuck Grassley
U.S. Senator

Tim Johnson,
U.S. Senator

Jeff Sessions,
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Tammy Baldwin,
U.S. Senator

Thad Cochran,
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Amy Klobuchar,
U.S. Senator

James M. Inhofe,
U.S. Senator

Lisa Murkowski,
U.S. Senator

Mike Enzi,
U.S. Senator