May 26, 2011

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
U.S. Senate  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  

Dear Senator Murkowski:  

The undersigned associations thank you for your efforts to address the important issue of rare earth minerals as a subset of critical minerals. We greatly appreciate your leadership in this area and look forward to working closely with you over the next several months.  

Rare earth minerals are used in numerous manufacturing applications including but not limited to: renewable energy products, chemicals, catalysts for petroleum refining, defense applications, consumer electronics, wind turbines and hybrid car batteries. Over the past year demand for some of these minerals has continued to increase while the export of several of these minerals has dropped dramatically. This has created not only a shortage in some of these materials but in some cases there has been a significant increase in the price of those minerals.  

Shortages and price increases are and will continue to create challenges for some manufacturers. There have been a number of bills introduced in the 112th Congress that address some aspect of the minerals issue. We are supportive of those efforts that examine and prioritize solutions in trying to address this issue. There are several provisions in these bills that help create a comprehensive solution. These include: re-opening of mines in the U.S. for responsible mining of these minerals; development of domestic processing capabilities; improvement of workforce; research and development for affordable alternative minerals; support for recycling and reuse of minerals. Most importantly, we believe that any comprehensive solution needs to address the problem in an expedited manner that is flexible enough to take into account the unique aspects of different industry sectors.  

We thank you for your efforts and recognition of this important issue as this touches on various aspects of manufacturing. Our members depend on these minerals for manufacturing a number of products and for making their process efficient. We look forward to working with Colin Hayes on your staff on rare earths and critical minerals legislation.  

Sincerely,  

Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers  
American Foundry Society  
American Iron and Steel Institute  
American Petroleum Institute  
AMT – The Association for Manufacturing Technology
European-American Business Council
Industrial Minerals Association – North America
IPC, The Association Connecting Electronics Industries
Metal Powder Industries Federation
Motor and Equipment Manufacturers Association
National Association of Manufacturers
National Electrical Manufacturers Association
National Marine Manufacturers Association
National Mining Association
North American Die Casting Association
Nuclear Energy Institute
Precision Machined Products Association
Society of Chemical Manufacturing and Affiliates
Specialty Equipment Market Association
Steel Manufacturers Association
Utah Manufacturers Association