United States Senate

June 17, 2026

The Honorable Chris Wright, Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Wright,

We write to express our concerns regarding recent statements indicating the Administration may be pursuing a West Coast Strategic Petroleum Reserve. We also wish to highlight the clear congressional direction in the enacted Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations law foreclosing such an action.

On June 2, 2026, oil producer Sable Offshore Corp., which owns three oil platforms off the coast of California, sent a proposal to the Department of Energy which calls for the establishment of a West Coast Petroleum Reserve in California. Sable proposed the new petroleum reserve "in response to the inquiries made by the Trump Administration." The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is an emergency stockpile of crude oil established to protect the U.S. economy and national security from major energy supply disruptions. Its needs, expansion, or operation should not be dictated by any one commercial entity.

While Congress has consistently provided, in bipartisan fashion, funding to operate and maintain existing petroleum reserves, the establishment of a new reserve is subject to a clear and specific restriction laid out in annual spending bills. The Fiscal Year 2026 Energy and Water Appropriations bill's accompanying report, as a condition of funding the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, explicitly prohibits the establishment of "any new regional petroleum product reserves unless funding for such a proposed regional petroleum product reserve is explicitly requested in advance in an annual budget request and approved by Congress in an appropriations act."

The Department of Energy's FY26 budget request, released in May of last year, contained no request for funds to establish or plan for any new regional petroleum reserve, let alone the new West Coast reserve that seems to be under active discussion. As such, any establishment of a new reserve this fiscal year would violate Congressional intent. Furthermore, your department once again omitted any mention of or proposal for a new petroleum reserve in its Fiscal Year 2027 budget request.

Considering this, we seek a full description of any current and planned activities to set up a new regional petroleum reserve as well as all correspondence with Sable Offshore Corp. regarding the issue of a new regional reserve. We also request that the Department cease all work to establish any new West Coast Strategic Petroleum Reserve until it has followed the process Congress has laid out for establishing any new petroleum reserve.

Given the current strains on our nation's energy security caused by this Administration's actions, the Department should be focused on reinforcing existing reserves, which are reaching

historic lows due to announced withdrawals, not pursuing costly new proposals driven by political considerations rather than strategic need.

We look forward to your prompt response with requested information, including what authorities and funding the Department is relying on to establish a new reserve, absent Congressional approval or consent.

Sincerely,

Alex Padilla
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator