

THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

The Honorable  
Mark Begich  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Begich:

I am writing with great appreciation for the leadership you have demonstrated in advancing American interests in the Arctic Region, a priority that obviously hits particularly close to home for Alaska. With that in mind, I wanted to apprise you of new steps that the Department of State is taking to strengthen our engagement on Arctic issues, all of which build on your input.

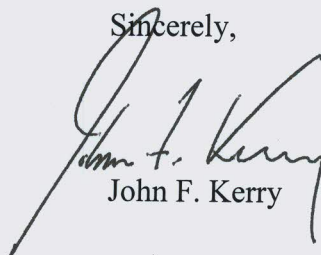
As you know, the President issued the National Strategy for the Arctic Region in May 2013. The National Strategy outlines three “lines of effort”: advance U.S. security interests, pursue responsible Arctic Region stewardship, and strengthen international cooperation. Last month, as a follow-up effort, the White House issued an “Implementation Plan” for the National Strategy. I know that development of the Implementation Plan benefitted from significant contributions from your offices, as well as from other U.S. partners and stakeholders, including the State of Alaska, Alaska native groups, and industry and environmental leaders.

For a long time now, I’ve shared the view that the Arctic region really is the last global frontier, and the United States needs to elevate our attention and effort to keep up with the opportunities and consequences presented by the Arctic’s rapid transformation. Properly managed, this region provides an opportunity for creative diplomatic leadership – but truly establishing and capitalizing on this leadership role will require making the Arctic region a higher U.S. priority; greater attention paid by senior policy makers; and, in keeping with President Obama’s call for “national unity of effort” on the Arctic, coordination of operational departments. Given U.S. responsibility for chairing the Arctic Council next year, time is of the essence. In the coming months, we will be seeking input from you on the overarching themes and specific initiatives that we can propose to take full advantage of our tenure as Arctic Council chair and to strengthen the Arctic Council itself, but I also believe it is vital that we elevate the entirety of Arctic issues and interests – environmental, economic, energy, geostrategic, national security, and more – within the State Department itself. I know well that both of you share this view, which is why I hope you will be pleased to know that I will be shortly naming a high level individual of substantial stature and expertise to serve as Special Representative for the Arctic

Region. I hope to receive further counsel from both of you as we create this new position at the State Department and identify the right person to lead the effort.

On behalf of the Department of State, I look forward to continuing our on-going collaboration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John F. Kerry". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "K".

John F. Kerry