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September 11, 2008

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Pete V. Domenici
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Bingaman and Ranking Member Domenici:

I am writing to request that a hearing be scheduled as soon as possible to examine the allegations of unethical and potentially criminal misconduct at the Interior Department's Minerals Management Service (MMS) brought to light yesterday by the Department's Inspector General. I specifically request that the Inspector General and Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne be called to testify. It is imperative that committee members have the opportunity to question Sec. Kempthorne regarding these allegations and the specific steps his agency is taking to implement and comply with the recommendations spelled out in the Inspector General's report.

I am deeply troubled that a substantial number of the most egregious alleged abuses originated in the Denver office of the MMS. As the Senate works to expand our oil and gas production from public lands, which will result in expanded MMS activities with respect to oil and gas royalty collection, we must do everything we can to restore the integrity and financial rigor of these critical programs to ensure American taxpayers receive fair value from our precious national resources. The scrutiny of Congressional hearings will be essential to beginning the long process of restoring public trust in the MMS.

Sincerely,



Ken Salazar
United States Senator