

Alaska trade groups: Incoherent domestic mining policy jeopardizes national security, economic development

Feb. 22, 2022, Anchorage - Today, leadership of the Alaska Chamber, the Alaska Miners Association, the Alaska Support Industry Alliance, the Associated General Contractors of Alaska, and the Resource Development Council for Alaska voiced frustration with announcements signaling an incoherent federal approach to domestic minerals development.

The reaction comes after the Biden Administration announced plans to convene a new working group that will make regulatory recommendations for domestic mining, and the U.S. Interior Department slowed the approval process for the Ambler Access Project on the same day.

The frustration felt by business advocacy groups is rooted in the reality that Alaska can help solve problems caused by domestic mineral scarcity and supply chain logjams. "My members would love to help responsible mining companies safely develop the vast mineral deposits located across Alaska," said Kati Capozzi, Alaska Chamber president and CEO. "The jobs and economic growth Alaska misses out on by pushing these opportunities overseas is irresponsible and shortsighted, and a loss for hardworking Alaskans at a time when we most need economic opportunity."

"On one hand, you have the Biden Administration saying, 'we want to produce more critical minerals here in the U.S.,' but then they deliberately bring domestic mining projects here in Alaska to a crawl," said Deantha Skibinski, executive director at the Alaska Miners Association. "It makes no sense, and will empower mining powerhouses like China, which already produces 87% of the minerals needed for renewable energy products. This policy defies logic."

"Today, we saw the Biden Administration announce that 'as a new minerals economy was being built in the U.S., it would be built around working Americans,'" said Rebecca Logan, CEO of the Alaska Support Industry Alliance. "A same-day action to delay the Ambler Project is insulting. We cannot meet demand for the minerals we need globally, and we certainly cannot domestically supply minerals through the recycling and reuse of minerals the Biden Administration is prioritizing."

The new federal working group is also certain to make it harder to do business in the U.S. while failing to provide additional environmental protections. "We already operate under strict environmental and financial assurance regulations on both the federal and state levels here in Alaska," said RDC Executive Director Leila Kimbrell. "This new working group will only increase our import dependence and make supply chain issues even worse. In addition, today's news about Ambler's delay is especially troubling because it is another example of states' rights being disregarded and politics being inserted into the process."

"Our mission at AGC is to build Alaska, not China," said Alicia Amberg, Associated General Contractors of Alaska's executive director. "Unfortunately, the only ones who benefit from today's Ambler decision are foreign adversaries who take advantage of bad policies and twist them to their benefit. My members want to build the new infrastructure Alaska needs, including roads. We want those jobs, and we want the opportunities new mines located along the Ambler Access Project would provide to Alaskans. Today's announcement is an unwelcome and unnecessary setback."

The Ambler Access Project is a proposed 211-mile, controlled industrial access road that would provide access to the Ambler Mining District in northwestern Alaska. The area is a large prospective copper-zinc mineral with extensive deposits of critical minerals and other elements.

About the Alaska Chamber

The Alaska Chamber is a non-profit founded in 1953 working to promote a positive business environment in Alaska. The Chamber is the voice of small and large business representing more than 700 businesses, manufacturers, and local chambers across Alaska. Our member companies employ more than 55,000 hard-working Alaskans. The Chamber advocates for a positive investment climate that provides certainty and stability for Alaska. More information about the organization is available at www.alaskachamber.com.

About the Alaska Miners Association

AMA is a professional membership trade organization established in 1939 to represent the mining industry in Alaska. AMA's more than 1,400 members come from eight statewide branches: Anchorage, Denali, Fairbanks, Haines, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan/Prince of Wales, and Nome. Alaska's miners are individual prospectors, geologists, engineers, suction dredge miners, small family mines, junior mining companies, major mining companies, Alaska Native Corporations, and the contracting sector that supports Alaska's mining industry.

About the Alaska Support Industry Alliance

The Alliance promotes responsible exploration, development and production of oil, gas and mineral resources for the benefit of all Alaskans. It represents more than 500 businesses who provide support to the oil and gas and mining industries.

About the Associated General Contractors of Alaska

AGC of Alaska is the construction industry's largest professional trade association, representing over 600 general and specialty contractors and industry suppliers/service providers statewide.

About the Resource Development Council for Alaska

RDC is an Alaska trade association with members in fishing, forestry, mining, oil and gas, and tourism, as well as the 12 regional Native corporations, labor, individuals, and others supporting the responsible development of Alaska's natural resources. More information is available at akrdc.org.

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