

Murkowski, Heitkamp introduce Senate bill to allow crude oil exports

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One week after introducing the Energy Supply and Distribution Act of 2015 (S. 1312), which would lift the US ban on exporting its crude oil to other nations, Senators Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) have introduced a second, more focused bill on the issue. While S. 1312 covered a few other topics, such as energy data transfer between the US, Canada, and Mexico, the new bill addresses crude oil exports in more detail.

The new legislation aims to lift the American ban on exporting crude oil, which was imposed in the 1970s. It also renders export licensing from the Department of Commerce unnecessary, except in the case of sanctions, national security concerns, or drawing from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Additionally, the President's authority to restrict oil exports would be curtailed to one-year increments in the event of national emergencies, sanctions, or negative economic fallout.

Despite predictions that its passage could lower domestic gas prices, the bill faces an uncertain future. America's tense relations with oil-producing states such as Iran and Russia may complicate the global energy market, and—notwithstanding its recent support for offshore drilling along the Atlantic coast—the Obama Administration may oppose the measure on environmental grounds.

Sources: E&E News, Global Trade & Sanctions Law, Senate.gov
