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February 18, 2009

The Honorable Kenneth L. Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW ms7229
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

It is my understanding that you have directed a review of regulations recently adopted by the Bush Administration concerning the carrying of concealed weapons in units of the national park and wildlife refuge systems.

With this in mind, I am writing to express my strong support for the regulations as they now exist. I think that the regulations promote important public policy objectives and that the procedure utilized to promulgate them passes muster under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

I believe that the final regulations properly defer to state laws regarding the possession and transport of firearms. In my opinion, this deference furthers the state prerogative and authority component of Executive Order 13132, relating to Federalism. In addition, the general intent of the regulations appears consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court's Second Amendment decision in District of Columbia et al. v. Heller.

In Alaska, previous state and federal laws allowed hunting in national wildlife refuges and in all but five units of the national park system. The new regulations permit the carrying of firearms in these five units as well, subject to state and federal law.

The possession and use of firearms are critical to urban and rural hunters in Alaska. As you know, my state contains vast, pristine areas where the ability to carry firearms can address a potentially life-threatening situation, enabling citizens to respond to bear and other wildlife conflicts. In addition, many urban and rural hunters utilize firearms in the pursuit of wildlife to satisfy their nutritional and cultural needs. Like the residents of other states, Alaskans also rely on firearms for self-defense in the vast acreage encompassed by our national parks and refuges.

In my opinion, reliance on state laws governing the possession and transport of firearms will not detract from the purposes of national parks and wildlife refuges. Existing state and federal laws are adequate to protect public safety and natural and cultural resources against poaching, vandalism, and other offenses.

I understand that some opponents of the new regulations argue that there was insufficient compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. I disagree. The proposed rulemaking process afforded more than adequate opportunity for public comment. Further, the initial publication of the rules contained a balanced and comprehensive discussion of the proposal and its rationale.

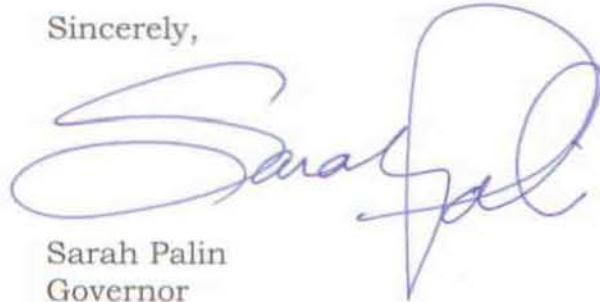
Mr. Secretary, I know that you are a strong supporter of the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. I believe that the deference to state laws in the final regulations furthers the letter and intent of the Amendment. Also important, the laws of Alaska relating to firearms represent a reasonable approach to the realities of life in the 49th state.

Perhaps, some other states, with their different situations, might enact a statutory framework that addresses those circumstances. The regulations contemplate that the respective states can develop solutions adapted to their individual realities. The final regulations reject a "one size fits all" federal solution in favor of deference to state law. For the reasons described above, Alaskans need this deference, which recognizes our particular situation, as we responsibly use firearms in various aspects of our daily lives.

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Thank you for considering my views, and I look forward to your visiting Alaska to see these realities for yourself.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sarah Palin", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Sarah Palin
Governor

cc: The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, United States Senate
The Honorable Mark Begich, United States Senate
The Honorable Don Young, United States House of Representatives