

**Message to American Physical Society's Division of Condensed Matter Physics, authorized by Nick Bonesteel, DCMP Secretary-Treasurer**

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**Action Requested: To contact your Senators to inform them of the urgency of passing S. 783, the Helium Stewardship Act and to encourage those who use helium in their research to enroll in the In Kind program. Details below.**

**Background:**

A February, 2011 report by the APS Panel on Public Affairs and the Materials Research Society identified helium as unique among the chemical elements because of its special properties and underscored the 1995 APS Council Statement that measures be adopted that will both conserve and enhance the nation's helium reserves. Failure to do so would not only be wasteful, but would also be economically and technologically shortsighted.

Because of its special nature, the government began stockpiling helium in the 1920s and today maintains a reserve from which it has been selling crude helium to refiners. However, because of a 1996 law that mandated the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) sell that helium at an artificially low price, and because the demand for helium has increased significantly since the law was enacted, end users have been subject to wild price fluctuations. Scientific researchers, including those who conduct low temperature research, have also experienced supply interruptions that have threatened the viability of their research projects.

Congress is currently seeking to fix the supply and pricing problems with legislation that would ultimately get the federal government out of the helium business, stabilize price fluctuations, and provide more of the supply of crude helium to the market.

The APS Office of Public Affairs is aware of the supply and pricing difficulties experienced by a number of its members and has been working closely with the relevant House and Senate committees on legislation to address those concerns. This includes an R&D provision that could lead to more helium capture from natural gas wells.

APS is also working to fix the BLM's In Kind program, which was established by the 1996 law to provide priority access to Federal users and federal grantees. Anecdotal evidence indicates that those users are not receiving priority access. Despite questions about proper implementation of the In Kind program, it remains the only means by which Federal users and Federal grantees can receive priority shipments of helium at pricing that is better than what is being offered on the market.

**Resources:**

Testimony by APS member Moses Chan -

[http://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings-and-business-meetings?id=9c129d49-385d-4fdd-8f56-105c180403a2&Statement\\_id=ab788459-f3d2-4280-90bc-f7739214da0e](http://www.energy.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/hearings-and-business-meetings?id=9c129d49-385d-4fdd-8f56-105c180403a2&Statement_id=ab788459-f3d2-4280-90bc-f7739214da0e)

Testimony by APS Vice President Sam Aronson -

<http://docs.house.gov/meetings/II/II00/20130214/100266/HHRG-113-II00-Wstate-AronsonS-20130214.pdf>

Information on registering for the BLM.s In-Kind Program is available on their website at <http://www.nm.blm.gov/heliumRegistration/heliumRegistration.html>

To ensure that helium remains available for you and your colleagues, please call the Washington, D.C. offices of your Senators by going to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and then following the link to individual Senate offices.

To stop receiving email of this nature from APS, click on the link below.  
<http://ultron.aps.org/cgi-bin/srconf?MID=BR104131&UNIT=DCMP&ACTION=-1>