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Critical Situation for the U.S. involving Helium Price and Availability

Problem: An impending worldwide shortage of helium with attendant major cost escalation will hit the U.S. later this year. Helium is consumed in high tech product manufacture, national defense operations, major science projects, large scale medical and commercial equipment, and in research conducted by national laboratories and universities.

Solution: Support, endorse and enact the tenets of the bipartisan bill, H.R. 527, the Responsible Helium Administration and Stewardship Act, currently in the House.

Background: Helium is a critical material. The Federal Helium Reserve, operated by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), was established in 1925 as a strategic supply of gas for airships. In the 1950s it became an important source of coolant during the Space Race and the Cold War. In 1996 Congress passed legislation to recover the \$1.4 billion debt incurred in establishing the Reserve by selling the helium. These sales currently supply 42% of the crude helium consumed in the U.S. and 35% of the crude helium consumed worldwide. The debt is projected to be recovered by September of this year. The 1996 legislation precludes BLM from selling helium once the debt is paid. Consequently there will be an immediate shortage and rapid price escalation if the situation is not addressed quickly. H.R. 527 strikes a balance between sales to helium refiners and end users and protects U.S. organizations and national interests through ca. 2028 when the Reserve will be depleted. The Coalition for the Commercial Application of Superconductors (CCAS) strongly endorses this bill.

CCAS members are involved in the end-use, manufacture, development and research of superconductor based systems, products and related technologies. CCAS members comprise large and small corporations, research institutions, national laboratories and universities.

Additional Information: For additional information please contact Dr. Alan Lauder, Executive Director, CCAS, at 610-388-6901 or alauder@comcast.net