



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEONS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEONS

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June 7, 2012

www.aaos.org/dc

The Honorable John Barrasso
United States Senate
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Barrasso:

On behalf of over 18,000 board-certified orthopaedic surgeons, the American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) would like to express its support for the Helium Stewardship Act of 2012 (S. 2374), which would address the impending helium shortage.

Helium is a critical element used in numerous applications in our medical community, including medical scanners such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanners and the manufacturing of optical fibers and LCD screens. S. 2374 would help maintain a reliable domestic supply of helium and minimize market disruptions that a shortage would trigger.

As you know, MRI scanners must be constantly cooled by liquid helium. MRI's are a critical tool that orthopaedic surgeons use to diagnose musculoskeletal disorders in our patients. According to General Electric, about 40 million MRI scans are conducted each year to help doctors diagnose illnesses or injuries. Additionally, scientific research and innovation, which ultimately may benefit healthcare, would be stifled by a helium shortage. It is therefore necessary that there be safe, reliable access to, and stable pricing for helium to provide the best possible patient care.

The AAOS applauds your efforts to revamp the Federal Helium Reserve program and create certainty and stability in the helium markets for all stakeholders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John R. Tongue MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

John R. Tongue, MD
President
American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons