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August 25, 2022

The Honorable Janet Yellen
Secretary of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

The Honorable Ventris C. Gibson
United States Mint Director
801 9th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20220-0012

Dear Secretary Yellen and Director Gibson,

I write with concerns regarding the U.S. Mint and its Silver American Eagle bullion coin program. A long-running production slowdown has led to shortages and dramatically higher market prices for this iconic silver coin as compared to its peers worldwide.

As you know, 31 U.S. Code § 5112(e) states, “the [Treasury] Secretary shall mint and issue, in qualities and quantities that the Secretary determines are sufficient to meet public demand coins which—(1) are 40.6 millimeters in diameter and weight 31.103 grams; (2) contain .999 fine silver; (3) have a design—(A) symbolic of Liberty on the obverse side; and (B) of an eagle on the reverse side.”

Many Americans have sought to hedge their assets against the high rates of inflation caused, in large part, by excessive government spending. Some do this by acquiring hard assets, including gold and silver. According to reports, overall market demand for bullion coins, bars, and other items, has thus risen to higher levels than seen in recent years, if not ever.

Yet the U.S. Mint has only made 11.6 million ounces of its Silver American Eagle bullion coin available to the public this year—half of what was supplied through the first seven months of prior years when demand was similarly strong.

This shortage in U.S. Mint production has apparently led to extremely high market-based premiums on Silver Eagles (as high as 70% over the silver melt value)—even as comparable items produced by other sovereign mints and private mints were not beset by such shortages or historically high premiums. The high costs resulting from the U.S. Mint production shortage directly harm U.S. citizens wishing to avail themselves of a U.S. legal tender means of protecting their financial security from the effects of inflation.

Please provide answers to the following questions:

1. Does the Secretary believe the Silver American Eagle coin is being produced in "qualities and quantities that... are sufficient to meet public demand"?
2. Why is only a single supplier currently allowed to (or willing to) provide the U.S. Mint with silver blanks for its Silver Eagle program?
3. Given its statutory mandate to amply supply these coins to the public, why doesn't the U.S. Mint have a policy to build a reserve of silver blanks during periods of slower demand in order to create a buffer for periods of higher demand?
4. Has the U.S. Mint examined the practices of other sovereign mints, such as the Britain's Royal Mint, Australia's Perth Mint, the Austrian Mint, and the Royal Canadian Mint, to learn from their relative success in meeting high public demand for their own silver coins? If so, what were the resulting findings or recommendations?
5. What actions are currently being undertaken to address the Mint's production problems (which reportedly extend beyond the Silver American Eagle coin program) and when will the U.S. Mint once again be able to fulfill its mandate to meet public demand?

Swift action to address these difficulties will allow the Silver American Eagle coin to remain a symbol of Liberty and government efficiency.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and I look forward to your response to these questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex X. Mooney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "A".

Alex X. Mooney
Member of Congress