

December 18, 2017

Dear Member of Congress:

The conference report for H.R. 1 would mandate oil and gas leasing in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, purportedly to help address the federal deficit. This legislation threatens to destroy America's most sacred protected lands, further endanger already imperiled wildlife, and jeopardize the culture and survival of the Gwich'in people— all for what amounts to a drop in the bucket of the national budget. **A vote for this bill is a vote for drilling in the Arctic Refuge.** On behalf of our millions of members and activists, we strongly urge you to oppose this backdoor attempt to sell off our country's pristine public lands for private gain, and to vote **no** on this legislation.

At 19.6 million acres of unspoiled nature, the Arctic Refuge is the grandest and wildest of America's publicly-owned reserves, and one the largest intact ecosystems on the planet. Home to numerous iconic and imperiled species and millions of birds, it embodies the country's commitment to preserving the matchless natural blessings and beauty so integral to our national identity and greatness. Its Coastal Plain is also the calving ground for the regal porcupine caribou herd, which is critical to the survival of the Gwich'in people who have called the Arctic home for millennia.

Repeated attempts over the years to allow drilling in the Refuge's Coastal Plain have consistently failed, thanks to broad bipartisan opposition in Congress and by the public. Today, support for preserving the Refuge is strong as ever: recent public opinion research shows that two-thirds of Americans from across the political spectrum are opposed to drilling in the Refuge. Indeed, prominent Republican leaders— from Ted Roosevelt IV to William Ruckelshaus, EPA Administrator under Presidents Nixon and Reagan— have publicly denounced the inclusion of the Arctic Refuge drilling mandate in the tax bill.

Proponents of drilling in the Arctic Refuge disingenuously argue that new technologies will allow "environmentally responsible" oil and gas development there. The truth is that drill rigs, air strips, road networks, vast pipelines, and support facilities would irreversibly mar this pristine wilderness, and harm the wildlife and people who depend on it for survival. Once gone, wilderness is gone forever.

Furthermore, defacing the Arctic Refuge to offset a trillion dollars in tax cuts is the height of fiscal irresponsibility. Revenue projections from oil leasing there are wildly exaggerated. Oil cannot flow for many years, and the logistical challenges mean industry will not offer the pipedream bids that drilling proponents presume. Thus, counting those projections as federal income is a recipe for increasing budget gaps, not reducing them. But even if true, the estimated revenue would be like a \$10 annual payment on a \$100,000 mortgage—a budgetary blip.

Using a device meant for budgetary prudence to open this national treasure to the oil industry is an abuse of the democratic process – a backdoor giveaway of our children's heritage that for 40 years has survived all assaults through more direct efforts. **Republicans and Democrats alike must remember the long history of bipartisan support for the Arctic Refuge, protect our natural heritage for future generations, and stop this dirty and destructive legislation in its tracks.**

Sincerely,

350.org
Alaska Wilderness League

American Rivers
Center for Biological Diversity
Clean Water Action
Climate Hawks Vote
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Endangered Species Coalition
Environment America
Environmental Defense Action Fund
Eyak Preservation Council
Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges
Friends of the Earth
Gwich'in Steering Committee
Hip Hop Caucus
League of Conservation Voters
National Audubon Society
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Native Conservancy
Northern Alaska Environmental Center
Oil Change International
Power Shift Network
Protect Our Winters
Sierra Club
The Wilderness Society
Trustees for Alaska
Voices for Progress
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
Young Evangelicals for Climate Action