

350.org \* Alaska Wilderness League \* American Bird Conservancy \* American Rivers  
Center for Biological Diversity \* Clean Water Action \* Defenders of Wildlife  
Earthjustice \* Endangered Species Coalition \* Environment America  
Environmental Defense Action Fund \* 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  
Natural Resources Defense Council \* Northern Alaska Environmental Center  
Oil Change International \* Sierra Club \* Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance  
The Wilderness Society \* Trustees for Alaska \* Voices for Progress

November 14, 2017

**RE: Vote recommendations for Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee markup**

Dear Senator:

The Energy and Natural Resources Committee meets this week to consider budget reconciliation legislation that would open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling, purportedly to help address the federal deficit. Contrary to its proponents' claims, this bill presents a stark choice between preservation and destruction of America's most pristine preserve; between public interest and corporate profit; between commitment to clean energy and continued reliance on dangerous pollutants; between fiscal prudence and wishful thinking; and between respect for Gwich'in culture and squandering vital subsistence habitat. On behalf of our millions of members and activists nationwide, we urge you to oppose this harmful legislation.

With good reason, in 1980 Congress created the Arctic Refuge as the largest pure wildland in the country and barred oil and gas drilling there. 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. Nursery, as well, to polar bears, 200 species of migratory birds and the vast herd of caribou that annually migrate further than any other land animal on Earth and sustain the Gwich'in communities along their path.

Even just on fiscal grounds, opening the Arctic Refuge to offset \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts is the height of 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. And 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.

**We urge you to join the long history of bipartisan support for the crown jewel of America's National Wildlife Refuges by voting no on this legislation.** We also urge you to support any amendments that seek to preserve Congress's original intent for the Refuge, prohibit waiving of bedrock environmental laws, and propose more realistic, viable alternatives for raising revenue. Above all, we urge you to make clear you will oppose any final legislation that would open up the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas development.

Sincerely,

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