

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 1, 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Lowey and Chair McCollum,

As you work to negotiate the final Fiscal Year 2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies bill, we write in strong support of Section 118 from Division C of H.R. 3055 that would hold this Administration accountable for promises laid out in H.R. 1, the “Tax Cut and Jobs Act,” by ensuring that any potential oil and gas lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge produce the level of revenues promised to the American taxpayer.

Two years ago, oil industry allies in Congress were able to take advantage of the expedited reconciliation process to include an Arctic Refuge leasing mandate in the 2017 tax bill without full and fair Congressional debate. This controversial provision, which would lead to irreversible damage of a pristine wilderness and risk the continued survival of the way of life of the Gwich’in people, should never had been included in unrelated tax legislation. However, pro-drilling members of Congress justified this effort by promising that over a billion dollars would go to the federal treasury from Arctic Refuge leasing and, further, that any lease sale would take place under a careful environmental review, consultation, and public engagement process.


Instead, after enactment, the Trump administration set out to rush an Arctic Refuge lease sale within two years – an aggressive politically motivated timeline that is two years quicker than the deadline included in H.R. 1. This has resulted in a flawed environmental review process that precluded any meaningful analysis of the impact development would have on local communities and wildlife, and deprived federal and climate scientists, the Gwich’in people, and the American public the opportunity to meaningfully contribute. The recently finalized process was a clear violation of the commitment to ensure Refuge development would not sacrifice wildlife or the environment for the sake of oil development. Now, with a lease sale expected in December, it is essential that Congress holds the administration accountable to the revenue projections laid out when passing this reckless provision.

The mandate to lease the Refuge was passed based on an assumption that an Arctic Refuge oil and gas program would generate \$2.2 billion in revenue within ten years, with \$1.1 billion going to the federal treasury to serve as a miniscule offset to the overall tax bill’s hefty \$1.5 trillion price tag. Section 118 would simply require BLM to set a minimum bid capable of generating the promised revenues. Minimum bids are the only mechanism available to BLM to ensure its lease sales generate this revenue.


To be clear, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of the last true wild places in North America, home to caribou, polar bears, and millions of migratory birds, and the Refuge's undisturbed coastal plain helps sustain the way of life for the Gwich'in people. Leasing should never occur there, regardless of how much revenue is generated. No amount of money can replace this unparalleled land, and it certainly cannot replace the way of life of the Gwich'in people who have relied upon it for a millennium.

However, given the realities of an impending lease sale, requiring a floor on what companies must pay to the American people to lease a piece of the Arctic Refuge's fragile coastal plain holds Congress and the Trump Administration accountable to its own promises. We do not support opening the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas drilling; however, as development moves forward, Section 118 would ensure the American taxpayer and the Refuge are protected from a bargain basement oil development program.

Sincerely,




Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress



Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress




Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



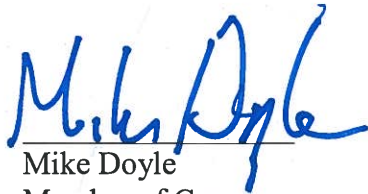
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Ro Khanna
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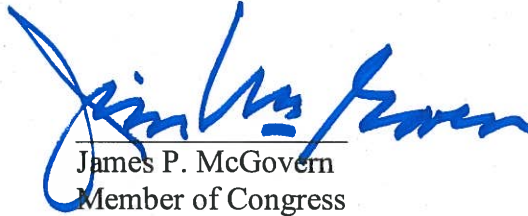
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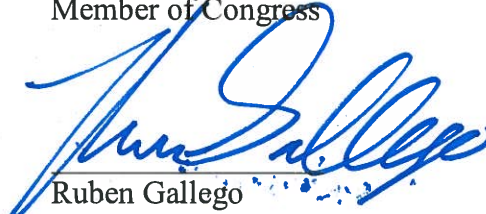
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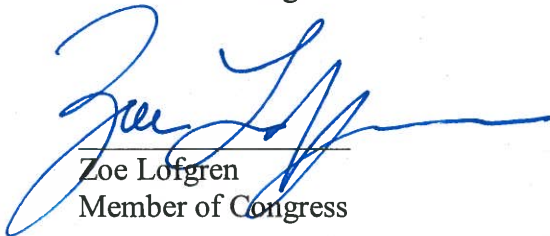
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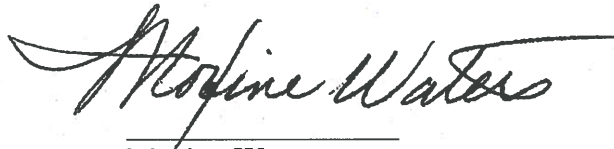
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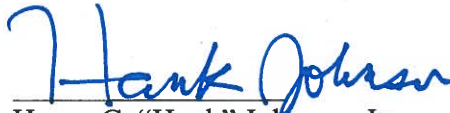
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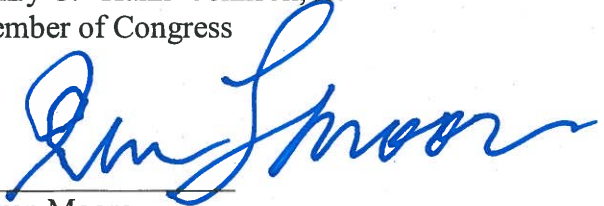
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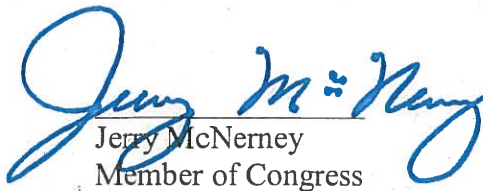
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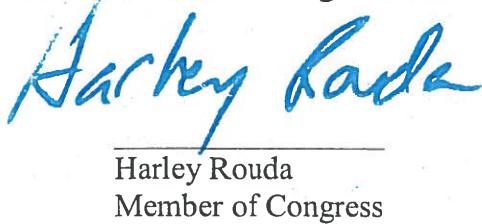
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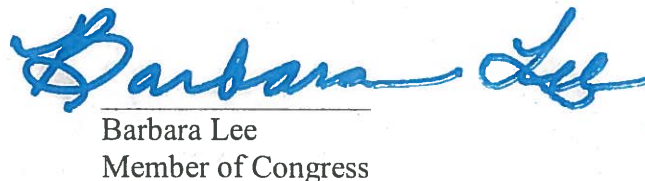

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