

July 22, 2020

RE: Vote YES on Rep. Huffman Amendment 83 to prevent oil and gas leasing in the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of our organizations and our millions of supporters across the country, we urge you to vote YES on Rep. Huffman's Amendment 83 to the FY21 Interior and Environment Division of the Appropriations minibus (H.R. 7608). This amendment would prevent funds from being used for oil and gas leasing in the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which was opened for drilling under the 2017 Tax Act.

"No funds provided in this Act may be used to offer any tracts available for oil and gas leasing in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge."

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of America's last wild places and is considered the crown jewel of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge is home to the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd, and as such is considered a sacred place by the Gwich'in people who rely upon the caribou for their traditional subsistence way of life. It is also home to 250 other wildlife species including polar bears, musk oxen, and migratory birds. Proposed oil and gas leasing would sacrifice the health of these treasured public lands for short-sighted, destructive fossil fuel production. Drilling in the Arctic Refuge remains deeply unpopular – with two-thirds of Americans, including a majority of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, opposing it. This amendment sides with the American public against destructive drilling of the Arctic.

What's more, the Trump administration's proposed leasing program does not meet the requirements of the law or fulfill the many commitments made during passage of the Tax Act about protection of the Arctic Refuge. It fails to set leasing acreage limitations and provide protection for the unique values of the Arctic Refuge, choosing instead to open the entire 1.5 million acres of the coastal plain in its preferred alternative. It does not protect vital subsistence resources, such as the Porcupine caribou herd, or other sensitive or threatened species like polar bears. This administration has placed arbitrary time and page limits on environmental reviews and ignored the realities of climate change. Yet that does not change the fact that leasing priceless conservation areas will not increase the energy security of the United States.

Projections of Arctic Refuge lease sales generating billions of dollars have been met with a hard dose of reality as oil prices plummeted this spring and have traded around \$30 per barrel over the past few months. The leasing program simply cannot raise the \$1 billion in revenue for the Federal Treasury promised in the 2017 Tax Act. The financial industry has also acknowledged the high-risk, low-return for developing in the Arctic. Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase, Morgan Stanley, Wells Fargo, CitiGroup, and over a dozen other global institutions have all announced they will not directly finance development in the Arctic Refuge. As these companies continue to price the impacts of climate instability into their investment models, meaningful capital for ill-conceived projects, such as oil development in the Refuge will disappear.

Rep. Huffman's amendment would prevent destructive oil and gas leasing from occurring on the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge. We urge you to protect one of the last remaining wild places from risky oil and gas drilling by voting YES for this amendment.

Sincerely,

Alaska Wilderness League Action
Arctic Audubon Society
Audubon Alaska
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Eyak Preservation Council
Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges
League of Conservation Voters
National Audubon Society
Natural Resources Defense Council
Northern Alaska Environmental Center
Sierra Club
Trustees for Alaska
The Wilderness Society
World Wildlife Fund