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## **Senator-Elect Begich Pledges Allegiance to Alaska's Oil Party**

### **Statement from Cindy Shogan, Executive Director, Alaska Wilderness League:**

“In Mark Begich’s out of the gate interview with NPR this morning, he proclaimed his strong support for drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It’s surprising that on his first day as Senator-Elect, Mr. Begich chose to blatantly contradict his own party platform and the position of President-Elect Obama.

It seems that in Alaska, the only party is the oil party.

As mayor of Anchorage, Alaska’s largest city, Mr. Begich has been a true leader in the fight against global warming. He also has worked to fund renewable energy projects and promote energy efficiency. His continued push to exploit Alaska’s natural resources contradicts these forward-thinking ideas.

Mr. Begich claims that drilling in the Arctic Refuge is necessary to get our country off foreign oil even though the federal government’s own experts have said that it will have minimal impact. He also parrots the often-repeated falsehood that drilling would only affect a small area of the Refuge. The U.S. Geological Survey has said that oil speculated to be found there is strewn across the entire 1.5 million acre Coastal Plain and would require approximately 800 wells to tap it. That means that, in addition to the roads, airports, gravel mines, pipelines and other infrastructure necessary for drilling, the Coastal Plain would become a virtual pin cushion of oil derricks.

We applaud Begich’s efforts to move our country toward a new energy future but remind him that he can’t have it both ways. We can’t break our addiction to oil by drilling for more oil.

As the new Senator of Alaska, Mark Begich is in a unique position to stand up for some of our nation’s greatest national treasures – as well as the wildlife and people that rely on these wild places to thrive and survive. Protecting wilderness has always been a core American value. It is up to us to pass these places onto our children and grandchildren. Because once we hand over places like the Arctic Refuge to Big Oil, they’re gone forever.”

### **About Alaska Wilderness League:**

Alaska Wilderness League is the only organization dedicated solely to the preservation of Alaska's wilderness in the nation's capital. Go to [www.alaskawild.org](http://www.alaskawild.org) to find out more.

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[www.AlaskaWild.org](http://www.AlaskaWild.org)

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