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Arctic Refuge drilling hoax: Our nation deserves better

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

“Today’s hearing in the House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee feels like a case of déjà vu. Pro-drilling members of Congress are pushing drilling in America’s Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – our nation’s last great wilderness place – as the answer to our budget woes and escalating unemployment. The problem is that opening the Arctic Refuge to drilling is a false solution to today’s problems - just as it was 10, 20 and 30 years ago.

Instead of leading this committee toward workable solutions, Rep. Doc Hastings (R-WA) is reviving the same old failed strategies of Congress-past. Take this quote as an example: “The refuge, with its large herds of calving caribou and a range of other natural riches, is a particular target of Republican legislators hoping to tap it for \$1.4 billion in deficit-reducing oil-lease revenues.’ Those words are from a 1995 editorial in the San Francisco Chronicle. Fast forward to 2011 and the only difference is that Rep. Hastings has inflated the numbers.

Once and for all, Big Oil’s cronies in Congress must stop using the Arctic Refuge as their favorite political hot potato. The American people deserve real solutions that lower our deficit and create jobs while protecting a place that millions of Americans continue to believe is an essential part of our natural heritage.

Instead of destroying the Arctic Refuge in a clear kowtow to Big Oil, we must stand up to the wealthiest corporations in the history of the world and cut off outrageous subsidies that come straight from taxpayers’ pockets. Over the next five years, the oil and gas industry is expected to receive more than \$78 billion in industry specific and general business subsidies. Take away those handouts and we’d be trimming 4,500 times more from our national deficit than if we depended on speculative revenues from leasing the entire 1.5 million acre Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain.

This is a time for real solutions. The Arctic Refuge is a treasure to be passed onto future generations, not a pawn to be sacrificed for political gamesmanship.”

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