

For Immediate Release
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Rep. Huffman, 100 Members to Zinke: Don't Sacrifice the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to Oil & Gas Drilling

Washington, D.C.- Ahead of today's Washington D.C. [public meeting](#) on the Trump administration's destructive proposal to allow oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Congressman Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael) led 100 members of Congress in saying "NO" to oil and gas drilling in the Refuge's protected Coastal Plain.

The Trump Administration is rushing forward with plans to lease drilling in the Refuge after it was jammed through under the GOP Tax Scam.

The letter underlines the representatives' concerns about the unacceptable risks of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and urges Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to take a science-based approach in the environmental review process, while also allowing for full involvement of the American people, including the Alaska Natives who will be significantly and negatively impacted by development.

"The Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is an exceptional part of our nation's natural heritage," wrote the representatives in today's letter. **"The wildlife, wilderness, recreation, subsistence, and cultural values that it was set aside to protect over fifty years ago remain unmatched today. We stand with the majority of the American public and the Gwich'in Nation in opposing all efforts to sacrifice this special place to oil and gas drilling."**

Rep. Huffman also recently introduced the [Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act](#) to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas drilling by repealing the controversial provision tucked into the 2017 Republican tax law that mandated oil and gas leasing, development, and production in the 1002 area of the Arctic Refuge.

Polling shows that the majority of Americans are "strongly opposed" to drilling in the Arctic Refuge. Recent public opinion research commissioned by the Center for American Progress showed that 67% of Americans oppose drilling in the Arctic Refuge, with a majority (52%) "strongly opposed." The Arctic Refuge and its Coastal Plain is home to

polar bears, grizzly bears, wolves, wolverines, muskoxen, and more than 130 species of migratory birds.

In addition to Rep. Huffman, today's letter was signed by: Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), Nanette Diaz Barragán (D-CA), Donald S. Beyer, Jr. (D-VA), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Brendan F. Boyle (D-PA), Julia Brownley (D-PA), Cheri Bustos (D-IL), Michael E. Capuano (D-MA), Salud O. Carbajal, Matt Cartwright (D-PA), Kathy Castor (D-FL), Katherine M. Clark (D-CA), Wm. Lacy Clay (D-MO), Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA), Joseph Crowley (D-NY), Charlie Crist (D-FL), Susan Davis (D-CA), Peter A. DeFazio (D-OR), Diana DeGette (D-CO), Rosa L. DeLauro (D-CT), Val B. Demings (D-FL), Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), Theodore E. Deutch (D-FL), Keith Ellison (D-MN), Anna G. Eshoo (D-CA), Bill Foster (D-IL), Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), John Garamendi (D-CA), Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL), Brian Higgins (D-NY), Pramila Jayapal (D-OR), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr. (D-GA), Ro Khanna (D-CA), Ruben J. Kihuen (D-NV), Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), Daniel T. Kildee (D-MI), Derek Kilmer (D-WA), James R. Langevin (D-RI), Rick Larsen (D-WA), Barbara Lee (D-CA), John Lewis (D-GA), Sander M. Levin (D-MI), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Daniel W. Lipinski (D-IL), Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Alan S. Lowenthal (D-CA), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM), Stephen F. Lynch (D-MA), Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY), Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY), Betty McCollum (D-MN), A. Donald McEachin (D-VA), James P. McGovern (D-MA), Jerry McNerney (D-CA), Seth Moulton (D-MA), Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Grace F. Napolitano (D-CA), Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Jimmy Panetta (D-CA), Donald M. Payne, Jr. (D-NJ), Ed Perlmutter (D-CO), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Mark Pocan (D-WI), Jared Polis (D-CO), David E. Price (D-NJ), Mike Quigley (D-IL), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), Bobby L. Rush (D-IL), Tim Ryan (D-OH), Janice D. Schakowsky (D-IL), Jose E. Serrano (D-NY), Adam B. Schiff (D-CA), Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH), Albio Sires (D-NJ), Adam Smith (D-WA), Darren Soto (D-FL), Jackie Speier (D-CA), Thomas R. Suozzi (D-NY), Paul Tonko (D-NY), Niki Tsongas (D-MA), Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), Peter Welch (D-VT), Frederica S. Wilson (D-FL), John A. Yarmuth (D-KY), Eric Swalwell (D-CA), Luis Gutierrez (D-IL), Judy Chu (D-CA), Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ), and Tim Walz (D-MN).

The full text of the letter can be found [here](#) or below:

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We write to express our serious concerns in response to the Notice of Intent issued April 20, 2018 to initiate a planning process for oil and gas leasing on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We strongly oppose fossil fuel development on these internationally significant public wildlands. We urge you to halt this rushed approach your department is taking to this environmental review in favor of a measured, science-driven effort that provides for robust public input and full involvement of the American people, including the Alaska Natives who will be significantly and negatively impacted by development. A planning process conducted in accordance with federal law will make clear that drilling on the Coastal Plain will cause irreparable harm to the wildlife, wilderness, recreational opportunities, and subsistence resources the Arctic Refuge was established to protect.

The bipartisan commitment to protecting the Coastal Plain of America's most iconic wildlife refuge has endured for more than half a century. This unparalleled landscape was first protected in 1960 by the Eisenhower administration as the Arctic National Wildlife Range in recognition of its "unique wildlife, wilderness, and recreational values." In 1980, Congress expanded and re-designated the area as a national wildlife refuge under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). Legislative efforts to open the Coastal Plain to oil and gas development were repeatedly defeated for decades with the strong support of the American public, and overwhelming opposition to drilling continues today. Nearly one million public comments were submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service during the process leading up to the adoption of the 2015 Comprehensive Conservation Plan, which recommended designating the Coastal Plain Wilderness. A full 96 percent of these comments supported this permanent protection. Moreover, according to recent public opinion research, two out of every three Americans oppose drilling in the Arctic Refuge.

Tragically, oil and gas leasing was imprudently included in the budget reconciliation process for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (H.R. 1, Pub. L. 115-97) last year. We opposed the addition of Arctic Refuge drilling to the tax legislation, which occurred behind closed doors bypassing full and fair debate in Congress. Recently, statements by Department of Interior officials indicate they intend to complete the environmental review for exploration and leasing in as little as one year. This rushed process to open the door for leasing is an unfortunate reminder of the equally rushed and ill-conceived reconciliation process. The timeline for this leasing process should be guided by sound science, not a partisan goal of rushing to lease within this current presidential administration. We

remind you that analysis of development in the refuge requires thoughtful, inclusive, science-based planning that upholds all congressional mandates. Hasty, cursory decision-making will hinder meaningful participation by the Gwich'in people and the American public, and risks violating federal conservation laws and international treaty obligations.

Oil and gas activities on the fragile Coastal Plain would inevitably jeopardize sensitive species, irreplaceable public lands, and the Gwich'in way of life, a prospect we cannot support. The Coastal Plain is the biological heart of the Arctic Refuge, providing essential habitat for imperiled polar bears, musk oxen, and hundreds of species of migratory birds that arrive from all fifty states and six continents. It is the vital calving ground for 200,000 animals that comprise the Porcupine Caribou Herd, which migrates internationally hundreds of miles each year in one of North America's greatest natural spectacles. The Coastal Plain is already experiencing unprecedented impacts from climate change. The indigenous Gwich'in people have relied on the caribou for millennia and consider the Coastal Plain "the sacred place where life begins" because of its importance to the caribou. To the Gwich'in, protecting the caribou means protecting their culture, their spirituality, their food security, and their human rights.

The Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is an exceptional part of our nation's natural heritage. The wildlife, wilderness, recreation, subsistence, and cultural values that it was set aside to protect over fifty years ago remain unmatched today. We stand with the majority of the American public and the Gwich'in Nation in opposing all efforts to sacrifice this special place to oil and gas drilling.

Sincerely,

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