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Democratic amendments reflect overwhelming public desire to protect America's Arctic

WASHINGTON – A pair of amendments introduced this afternoon during the full House Appropriations Committee mark-up for the Department of the Interior appropriations bill acknowledged the broad majority support of the American public for protecting America's Arctic and its coastlines. Both amendments failed on voice votes.

Background on amendments:

Rep. Chellie Pingree's (D-ME) offshore amendment would prevent the Department of the Interior from developing a new five-year offshore leasing program. There are no Arctic, Atlantic or Pacific lease sales in the current 2017-2022 program, and reinserting them into the 2019-2024 proposed program undermines a plan that had broad public support and threatens spills in America's Arctic waters that would harm coastal economies and marine life.

Rep. Nita Lowey's (D-NY) amendment #2 would prevent the Department of the Interior from moving forward with lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Last year, a damaging environmental rider was slipped into the controversial "Tax Cuts and Jobs Act" that, for the first time in history, mandates auctioning off the Arctic Refuge's pristine coastal plain to the highest bidder.

Statement by Kristen Miller, Conservation Director, Alaska Wilderness League:

"Withholding funding from the Trump administration to conduct drilling in America's coastal waters and the iconic Arctic National Wildlife Refuge reflects the will of the public majority that support protecting America's Arctic. Unfortunately, it's clear that there is no place in America's Arctic too sacred to indigenous communities or too vital to wildlife for the Trump administration to drill. We applaud those members of Congress committed to protecting America's public lands and waters in Alaska and the Arctic.

The rushed push for Arctic Refuge drilling is incredibly unpopular and would transform the wildest place left in America into an industrial complex of oil rigs, roads, pipelines and landing strips. Opening new areas in Arctic Ocean to development would set us back greatly in the climate fight and put the region at clear risk of an oil disaster. Both of these processes have been driven purely by politics and neither are in the best interest of Americans."

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