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Huffman, Fitzpatrick, 100 Lawmakers Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Restore Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Protections

Washington, D.C.- Today, Representatives Jared Huffman (D-CA), Chair of the Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee, Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Vice-Chair of the Problem Solvers Caucus, and 100 lawmakers introduced Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act, bipartisan legislation to halt the oil and gas drilling exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge currently being pursued by the Trump administration.

The Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act would protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas drilling by repealing the controversial provision in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that mandated oil and gas leasing, development, and production in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge.

“The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of the last great expanses of untouched wilderness areas in America, but the Trump Administration is attempting to launch an all -out drilling spree, with no regards for the climate impacts or the effect on the Gwich’in people, who have lived off the land for generations.” said Rep. Huffman. **“I’m introducing the bipartisan Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act to repeal the dangerous drilling provision that was slipped into the tax bill at the eleventh hour. This is a bipartisan message that we must keep the drills out of this national treasure. Time is not on our side here: the Trump administration is in a hurry, so we need to immediately repeal this oil and gas giveaway to ensure that the Arctic Refuge’s coastal plain remains unspoiled for future generations to experience and enjoy.”**

“Serving as good stewards of our environment is something each of us are called to regardless of location, background or political ideology. Protecting our nation’s open spaces and wild places unites us as Americans,” said **Rep. Fitzpatrick**. “I’m proud to stand with my colleagues in support of this bipartisan legislation and urge others to join us in the defense of America’s wilderness.”

“The coastal plain is sacred to the Gwich’in people and critical to our food security and way of life. It is no place for heavy machinery and destructive seismic testing,” said

Bernadette Demientieff, the executive director of the Gwich'in Steering Committee.

“We celebrate the delay of seismic testing, but this is not a final victory. The Gwich'in remain steadfast that seismic exploration and oil leasing can never happen on the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd, and we will continue to fight until our lands and our way of life are safe. I am thankful to Representative Jared Huffman and Representative Brian Fitzpatrick for introducing a bill that will restore protections for the coastal plain.”

“The American people never wanted drilling in our nation's largest and wildest Refuge. It passed, not because of popular sentiment or because of any urgent need for its speculative oil, but because it was jammed into a larger tax bill, skirting a full, fair and open debate,” **said Adam Kolton, executive director of Alaska Wilderness League.** “Today, Congressmen Huffman and Fitzpatrick and more than 100 cosponsors are taking the critical first step to restore protections to this national treasure, giving new hope to the millions of Americans who believe we should protect Arctic Refuge for future generations.”

“We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Rep. Huffman, the Gwich'in Steering Committee and other congressional allies to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the polar bears, caribou, ice seals and other species that depend on these irreplaceable public lands and waters. Throughout this fight, the American people have been crystal clear: do not drill in the Arctic refuge. Defenders of Wildlife, our conservation and Native partners, and elected officials will make sure these voices are heard,” **said Jamie Rappaport Clark, CEO and president, Defenders of Wildlife.**

“The Arctic Refuge is one of America's most majestic places and essential to the survival of Native communities in Alaska. We are deeply grateful to Representatives Huffman and Fitzpatrick for introducing the Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection Act. This is a necessary step toward correcting the 2017 tax package that opened the refuge to drilling,” **said Jamie Williams, president of The Wilderness Society.** “The 2017 rider was an egregious abuse of the federal budgeting process, and we now call on Congress to pass this bipartisan bill before the Trump Administration wreaks permanent damage by trying to industrialize the refuge this year. The coastal plain is home to Porcupine Caribou Herd, polar bears, musk oxen, wolves and nearly 200 species of birds. It is also sacred to Alaska's indigenous Gwich'in people. A land so special is no place for oil and gas development.”

“Rep. Huffman's bill would restore long-standing protections against drilling in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which the 2017 Republican tax bill shamefully opened up to Big Oil,” **said Gene Karpinski, president of the League of Conservation Voters.** “Despite widespread opposition across the country, the Trump administration has worked as quickly as possible to drill in this pristine landscape, the biological heart of the Arctic Refuge that has long sustained the Gwich'in people, who

call this iconic land ‘The Sacred Place Where Life Begins’. We are proud to stand with Rep. Huffman, the new pro-environment House, and any member of Congress willing to fight to undo this blatant giveaway to the oil and gas industry.”

“For decades this wild and biologically diverse landscape was protected from oil and gas development by Democrats and Republicans. That protection was stripped away in the tax bill of 2017 and deserves to be restored. More than 200 species of birds, including the American Golden-Plover, Snowy Owl and Northern Pintail, depend on the Arctic Refuge. It was shameful that Congress allowed oil drilling in America’s most pristine wildlife refuge, but we can set that mistake straight,” **said David Yarnold, president and CEO of the National Audubon Society**. “Audubon supports Representative Huffman’s bill that will provide vital protection for the Arctic Refuge and the birds, wildlife, and people that rely on it.”

"Drilling in the Arctic Refuge would threaten the food security and human rights of the Gwich'in people and permanently destroy one of the world's last wild places, all to dig up more oil that would worsen the climate crisis," **said Sierra Club Lands Protection Program Director Athan Manuel**. "That’s why the overwhelming majority of Americans oppose drilling there, as do a growing number of investors and financial institutions. Now Congress has a chance to undo the dangerous and short-sighted decision to sell off this special place to corporate polluters. We applaud Representative Huffman and the bill’s co-sponsors for their leadership in protecting America's Refuge.”

“This bill calls a halt to the administration’s headlong rush to sell off this special wilderness to corporate polluters. And it preserves the fundamental human rights of the Gwich’in people whom these lands have sustained for thousands of years, and who—among two-thirds of all Americans—oppose drilling in the Arctic Refuge,” **said John Bowman, Senior Director for Federal Affairs at the Natural Resources Defense Council**. “There’s no such thing as a refuge where destruction is permitted. You can’t call these fragile wildlands a refuge if you cast them open to 90,000 pound trucks and allow destructive activities that will further threaten imperiled polar bears, foxes, musk oxen and migratory birds.”

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 two thirds of the American public oppose drilling in the Arctic Refuge, with a majority (52%) “strongly opposed.”

President Dwight D. Eisenhower first initiated protection of the wilderness values of the Arctic coastal plain in 1960 when he set aside 8,900,000 acres establishing the Arctic National Wildlife Range. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed into law Rep. Morris

Udall's legislation doubling the size of the territory and providing additional protection for the land by converting it into the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The Arctic Refuge and its Coastal Plain is home to porcupine caribou, polar bears, grizzly bears, wolves, wolverines, muskoxen, and more than 130 species of migratory birds.

Along with original sponsor Huffman and lead co-author Fitzpatrick, the bill is being introduced by Representatives Pete Aguilar (D-CA), Nanette Diaz Barragan (D-CA), Karen Bass (D-CA), Donald Beyer (D-VA), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Brendan Boyle (D-PA), Anthony Brown (D-MD), Julia Brownley (D-CA), Salud Carbajal (D-CA), Tony Cardenas (D-CA), Matt Cartwright (D-PA), Sean Casten (D-IL), Kathy Castor (D-FL), Judy Chu (D-CA), David Cicilline (D-RI), Yvette Clark (D-NY), Lacy Clay (D-MO), Steve Cohen (D-TN), Gerald Connolly (D-VA), Jason Crow (D-CO), Joe Cunningham (D-SC), Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Diana DeGette (D-CO), Val Butler Demings (D-FL), Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), Theodore Deutch (D-FL), Debbie Dingell (D-MI), Michael Doyle (D-PA), Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Adriano Espaillat (D-NY), Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), John Garamendi (D-CA), Jimmy Gomez (D-CA), Debra Haaland (D-NM), Alcee Hastings (D-FL), Katie Hill (D-CA), Brian Higgins (D-NY), James Himes (D-CT), Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), Joseph Kennedy III (D-MA), Ro Khanna (D-CA), Daniel Kildeer (D-MI), Derek Kilmer (D-WA), Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL), Brenda Lawrence (D-MI), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Mike Levin (D-CA), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Daniel Lipinski (D-IL), Zoe Lofgran (D-CA), Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY), Tom Malinowski (D-NJ), Doris Matsui (D-CA), Betty McCollum (D-MN), Donald McEachin (D-VA), James McGovern (D-MA), Jerry McNerney (D-CA), Grace Meng (D-NY), Joseph Morelle (D-NY), Seth Moulton (D-MA), Debbie Mucarsel-Powell (D-FL), Stephanie Murphy (D-FL), Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Joe Neguse (D-CO), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Ilhan Omar (D-MN), Jimmy Panetta (D-CA), Ed Perlmutter (D-CO), Scott Peters (D-CA), Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Mark Pocan (D-WI), Mike Quigley (D-IL), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Tim Ryan (D-OH), Harley Rouda (D-CA), Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), Janice Schakowsky (D-IL), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Jose Serrano (D-NY), Donna Shalala (D-FL), Albio Sires (D-NJ), Adam Smith (D-WA), Darren Soto (D-FL), Jackie Speier (D-CA), Thomas Suozzi (D-NY), Paul Tonko (D-NY), Lori Trahan (D-MA), David Trone (D-MD), Jefferson Van-Drew (D-NJ), Nydia Velazquez (D-NY), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ), Maxine Waters (D-CA), Frederica Wilson (D-FL), and Peter Welch (D-VT).

The Arctic Cultural and Coastal Plain Protection is supported by the Alaska Wilderness League, Gwich'in Steering Committee, Braided River, REDOIL, Fairbanks Climate

Action Coalition, Center for Biological Diversity, Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, Environment America, League of Conservation Voters, National Audubon Society, Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges, The Wilderness Society, National Wildlife Refuge Association, Native Movement, Earthjustice, Stand.earth, Natural Resources Defense Council, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Alaska Wilderness League, Klamath Forest Alliance, Environmental Protection Information Center, Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, Wilderness Watch, Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, Climate Hawks Vote, Trustees for Alaska, Friends of the Earth US, Klamath Forest Alliance, Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship, and Conservation Alliance.

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