



Dear Senator Gardner,

You have often spoken of your commitment to public lands, calling the vast open terrain and expanses of the American west “the heart and soul of this country.” And yet, among other anti-public lands actions you have taken, in 2017 you cast one of the swing and decisive votes to mandate oil leasing in one of our nation’s most iconic, cherished and biologically rich landscapes — the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Why you voted in 2017 during passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to reverse more than 60 years of bipartisan protections for this national treasure, when nearly two-thirds of Colorado voters opposed doing so, has never been entirely clear to us. What is clear is that by making oil and gas a purpose of a national wildlife refuge for the very first time in history, you established a dangerous precedent for reversing public land protections here in Colorado and around the country. You voted to make a long-term bet against renewable energy and innovation in favor of increasing carbon pollution by as much as 4.3 billion metric tons over the next 70 years.

You have said almost nothing publicly about it since taking this historic anti-public land vote. But during a U.S. Senate Energy Committee hearing prior to passage of the Tax Act — the measure that included the Arctic Refuge leasing mandate — you heard what we now know to be false assurances from the Trump administration in response to direct questions you posed. At the time, acting U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Greg Sheehan told you, to your apparent

satisfaction, that the administration would undertake a four to five year process before a lease sale could take place, so that all environmental laws could be dutifully followed.

In fact, the Trump administration has been rushing to hold a lease sale in half the time it had promised, seemingly to beat a political clock. Far from following environmental laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act and the National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act, Politico recently reported the Trump administration has sidelined and silenced its own scientists, refused to conduct recommended new studies, and dismissed expert concerns about impacts to hundreds of thousands of calving caribou, denning polar bears and millions of nesting and staging migratory birds.

You were assured by the Trump administration that extensive public input would be sought and yet several Gwich'in Athabaskan villages that depend on the caribou for their culture and subsistence were denied community hearings and denied subsistence consultation as required by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. Requests to hold hearings here in Colorado and elsewhere around the country — outside of Alaska and D.C. — on the fate of this nationally-significant wildlife refuge were also rejected.

When you voted to mandate Arctic Refuge leasing, you did so with another basic assumption written into the law: that lease sales would generate at least \$2 billion in total revenue, half of which would flow into the federal treasury as the only “offset” for the \$1.5 trillion Tax Act. The Trump administration has since made clear it cares little if this target is met, refusing to have the Bureau of Land Management set sufficient minimum lease sale bids. Indeed, an analysis from the nonpartisan watchdog group Taxpayers from Common Sense projects a lease sale could generate as little as \$20.8 million, “effectively add[ing] to the deficit by increasing the cost of the Tax Act and expos[ing] taxpayers to significant liabilities from future drilling in the ecologically sensitive region.”

In light of the retreat from the revenue projections in the Tax Act, the reckless manner by which the Trump administration is rushing its leasing process, and because allowing oil companies to drill in the Arctic Refuge sets a dangerous precedent for Colorado's protected landscapes, threatens the environment, indigenous rights and our climate, we implore you to change your position.

If you believe, as you have said, that “public lands are a very important part of who we are in Colorado” and “part of our way of life,” then you should support legislation authored by Senator Michael Bennet that would fully protect this ecological wonder for future generations.

Once again, on behalf of our Colorado members and supporters we urge you to reverse your earlier position and to stand with the overwhelming majority of Coloradans — including more than 100 outdoor recreation businesses — who have called for protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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