

December 11, 2017

Dear Member of Congress,

As state leaders in the black church, we write to urge you to oppose drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as part of the tax reform bill.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a part of God's creation that is one of America's last intact wilderness areas---unique in its ecological integrity and beauty. This sacred landscape is also home of the Gwich'in, an Alaska native people who depend upon the Porcupine caribou herd for their daily subsistence. One of the first casualties due to disturbances from drilling in the Coastal Plain of the refuge would be the caribou population, which in turn would destroy the Gwich'in way of life.

As pastors and religious leaders, we are gravely concerned about the injustice that would be borne by a people who have lived in the Arctic Refuge for tens of thousands of years. The Gwich'in people rely on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge, not only for food security, but for their spiritual wellbeing. For the Gwich'in the Coastal Plain is "the place where life begins."

As black church leaders, we are also struck by the similar injustices continually faced by the African American community. We may live far from Alaska, but our plight as African Americans is one and the same, and thus the call to protect the land of the Gwich'in, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, is a common cause.

The possibility of oil exploration in the Refuge jeopardizes the ecological integrity of the Refuge and the way of life of the Gwich'in people. We ask you to be just and compassionate and prevent oil exploration or drilling in this precious part of God's creation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Welton Pleasant
President
California State Baptist, Inc.

Dr. E. Wayne Gaddis
President
CA Missionary Baptist State Convention

Dr. Joe B. Hardwick
President
Western Baptist State Convention of CA

Presiding Elder Allen Williams, Sr.
Los Angeles District AME Church

Presiding Elder Cedric V. Alexander
Northern CA AME Church

Presiding Elder Booker T. Guyton
Northern CA District AME Church

Presiding Elder T.J. Davis, Jr.
Oakland District CME Church

Presiding Elder Elois Knox
San Francisco District CME Church

Presiding Elder Mark Hardin
Los Angeles District CME Church

Rev. Dr. Joe B. Hardwick
President
Western States Baptist Convention – CO/WY

Presiding Elder Roscoe C. McKinney
CME Jacksonville – Orlando District

Presiding Elder Lionel Walker
CME – Miami – Tampa District

Dr. James B. Sampson
President
Florida General Baptist Convention

Elder Willie J. Williams
President
Florida State Primitive Baptist State Convention, USA, Inc.

Presiding Elder James Davis
Pensacola-Mariana District AME

Presiding Elder Carlton L. Taylor
Tallahassee District AME

Presiding Elder Valarie J. Walker
Orlando District AME

Presiding Elder Vincent F. Mitchell
Central District AME

Presiding Elder Elizabeth E. Yates
Alachua-Central AME

Presiding Elder Tony D. Hansberry
Suwannee-North AME

Presiding Elder Karen Walker
CME - Chicago District

Dr. William H. Foster, Jr.
President
Baptist General State Convention of Illinois

Rev. Keith B. McGee
President
United Baptist State Convention of Illinois

Rev. Dr. Michael H. Harrison, Sr.
President
Ohio Baptist State Convention

Dr. Otha Gilyard
President
Ohio Baptist General State Convention, Inc.

Rev. Ivory K. Jones, III
President
United Missionary Baptist State Convention of OH

Presiding Elder Earl G. Harris
Cleveland District AME Church

Presiding Elder P. Robert Tate
Youngstown District AME Church

Presiding Elder Walton E. Blake
Cincinnati District AME Church

Presiding Elder Betty W. Holley
Columbus-Springfield AME Church

Presiding Elder Melonia A. Valentine
Dayton District AME Church

Presiding Elder Bruce Gibson
Cleveland-Pittsburg CME Church

Presiding Elder Tracy Jackson
Cincinnati-Dayton CME Church

Elder Larry Tatum
Mid-Western Vice President
National Primitive Baptist Convention

Dr. Bruce N. Alick
President
The Pennsylvania Baptist State Convention, Inc.

Presiding Elder Eric L. Brown
Allegheny-Scranton District AME Church

Presiding Elder James McLemore
Pittsburg District AME Church

Presiding Elder Julius Clay
Philadelphia District CME Church

Dr. Lester Taylor
President
General Baptist State Convention of New Jersey

Dr. Robert L. Curry
President
United Missionary Baptist Convention of New Jersey

Presiding Elder Larry Dixon
Atlantic City District AME Church

Dr. Carl Washington
President
Empire Baptist Missionary Convention

Presiding Elder Frederick Belcher
NY District CME Church

Dr. Billy G. Russell
President
MN State Baptist Convention

Dr. James Blassingame
President
Baptist Educational & Missionary Convention of South Carolina

Presiding Elder Jetson R. Maness
Charleston-Columbia District CME Church

Superintendent Earnest Odom
Lower Midland District (SC) COGIC

Superintendent William A. Prioleau
Southeastern District (SC) COGIC

Presiding Elder Juenarri Keith
Mount Pleasant District (SC) AME Church

Presiding Elder Allen Parrott
Kingtree District (SC) AME Church

Presiding Elder Sandy Drayton
Georgetown District (SC) AME Church

Presiding Elder Malachi Duncan
Charleston District (SC) AME Church

Presiding Elder Joseph Darby -
Beaufort District (SC) AME Church

Dr. Gregory Christopher
President
North Pacific Baptist State Convention (WA)