



## Cosponsor S. 2461 – Arctic Refuge Protection Act

In September 2019, Senators Markey (D-MA), Bennet (D-CO), Cantwell (D-WA), Udall (D-NM), Schumer (D-NY), and Carper (D-DE) introduced S. 2461 – **the Arctic Refuge Protection Act of 2019**.

This legislation to designate the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge a wilderness area and protect its sensitive coastal plain from oil and gas leasing and development.



- *An Iconic Wilderness:* The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is our nation’s largest and wildest refuges, comprising 19.6 million acres of wild lands including its biological heart, the coastal plain. More than 250 wildlife species rely on the Arctic Refuge’s diverse habitats, including the –threatened Southern Beaufort Sea population of polar bears, plus birds that migrate to every state in the U.S. and across six continents.
- *A Human Rights Imperative:* The Porcupine River caribou herd, a primary subsistence food source for the indigenous Gwich’in people, migrate hundreds of miles each year to the coastal plain to give birth. To the Gwich’in, the coastal plain is the “Sacred Place Where Life Begins” because of its importance to the caribou, which has supported their way of life for thousands of years. The Gwich’in Nation stands in solidarity against development.
- *Deeply Unpopular with the American People:* For decades, 2/3 of Americans polled oppose drilling in this iconic landscape and remains unpopular with people who do not want, did not ask for, and will not accept that the wildest place in our country is on track to be sacrificed. Protecting wild places such as the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge is a core American value.

After nearly four decades of protection, the Refuge was opened for development without full and fair debate as part of a controversial tax package in the waning hours of 2017. This is the first time any national wildlife refuge in the United States has been retroactively opened and re-designated for oil and gas development. It is the single most destructive attack on the wilderness, wildlife and subsistence resources of a national wildlife refuge in modern history. Since it was opened, the Department of Interior has been barreling forward with plans for destructive oil and gas exploration and drilling, disregarding the serious biological, cultural and climate impacts fossil fuel extraction will have in the rapidly-warming Arctic. **The Administration’s rush to sell-off the Arctic Refuge must be halted.**

**Bottom Line:** S. 2461 will designate the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge a wilderness area and ensure there is no oil and gas development on the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge. We urge you to join with the Gwich’in people and the majority of the American public **in supporting this important legislation and doing all you can to stop oil and gas development.**

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