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Conservation Organizations Support Interior Appropriations Arctic Refuge Provision to Hold Trump Administration Accountable under the 2017 Tax Law

Bill language requiring a floor on lease sale bids holds Trump and members of Congress who voted in favor of the 2017 tax bill accountable to the promises made when Arctic Refuge leasing was slipped in without a fair and open debate.

Washington, D.C. — Today, the House Appropriations Committee passed its Interior, Environment and Related Agencies 2020 funding bill, which includes a provision requiring any Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil and gas lease sales offered by the Trump administration to meet the revenue promised by the 2017 Tax Act. Specifically, the language stipulates that the Bureau of Land Management must set minimum lease sale bids capable of meeting the \$2 billion projected revenue included as the single offset in the tax bill.

The average Alaska North Slope lease sale bid since 2000 is just \$31 per acre. To achieve the billion dollars in federal revenue Republicans have claimed, acreage in the Arctic Refuge would have to lease for more than \$2,000 per acre — a 6,000%-plus mark-up. By setting a floor on what companies must bid to lease land on the Arctic Refuge's fragile coastal plain, language in the current Interior appropriations bill simply holds Congress accountable for promises made in 2017.

FUNDING RESTRICTION

SEC. 118. None of the funds made available to the Department of the Interior by this or any other Act may be used to conduct a lease sale pursuant to section 20001(c)(1) of Public Law 115-97 which does not contain a national minimum acceptable bid amount sufficient to produce Federal receipts to the Treasury, net of any state share, of no less than 50 percent of the amount required by section 2001(b) of H. Con. Res. 71, the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2018, as agreed to on October 26, 2017.

Alaska Wilderness League, Braided River, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, Earthjustice, Environment America, Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges, League of Conservation Voters, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Refuge Association, Natural Resources Defense Council, The Wilderness Society and World Wildlife Fund issue the following statement on the successful markup of the Interior Appropriations bill with the inclusion of the Sec. 118 funding restriction on Arctic Refuge leasing:

“No amount of money could ever justify the destruction of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. That said, we are grateful to Representative McCollum for her leadership today and applaud the committee for holding the Trump administration and members of Congress who voted for the Arctic Refuge drilling provision in the 2017 tax bill accountable for their false promises. The Interior appropriations bill will now head to the floor with language ensuring that the Arctic Refuge coastal plain, a place sacred to the Gwich'in people, is not handed over to private interests.

“Seventy percent of Americans oppose development in the Arctic Refuge, home to caribou, polar bears and millions of migratory birds. Leasing should never take place on its coastal plain wilderness regardless of how much revenue is promised, which is why we also support legislation introduced in the House by Representatives Jared Huffman (D-CA) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) that would undo the Arctic

Refuge leasing mandate and restore protections to the coastal plain. No amount of money can replace this unparalleled public land, and it certainly can't replace the value of an area the Gwich'in people refer to as 'the sacred place where life begins.'"

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