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Conservation, Alaska and Indigenous Organizations Applaud Interior Spending Provision that Holds Trump Administration Accountable for Misleading Arctic Refuge Promises

Bill language requiring a floor on lease sale bids holds Trump and members of Congress accountable for promises made when Arctic Refuge leasing was inserted in the 2017 tax bill

Washington, D.C. — The United States House of Representatives yesterday evening rejected a bid to amend its Interior Department spending bill that includes language requiring any Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil and gas lease sales offered by the Trump administration to meet revenue projections promised by the 2017 Tax Act. Specifically, the language stipulates that the Bureau of Land Management must set minimum lease sale bids for an initial sale capable of meeting one-half of the \$1 billion projected federal revenue included as the single offset in the tax bill. An amendment to strike the Arctic Refuge language offered by Representatives Jeff Duncan (R-SC), Don Young (R-AK) and Paul Gosar (R-AZ) failed on the floor Thursday on a 198-233 vote.

The average Alaska North Slope lease sale bid since 2000 is \$31 per acre. To achieve one-half of \$1 billion dollars in promised federal revenue, acreage in the Arctic Refuge would have to lease for at least \$2,500 per acre. 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 holds the Trump administration and members of Congress that voted for the tax bill accountable for unrealistic promises made in 2017.

Gwich'in Steering Committee, Alaska Wilderness League, Braided River, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges, National Audubon Society, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Sierra Club and The Wilderness Society issued the following statement on passage of the Interior Appropriations bill with language restricting Arctic Refuge leasing:

"We applaud the House for holding to account the Trump administration and members of Congress who voted for the 2017 tax bill while cooking the books on Arctic drilling revenues. Even if lease prices were anywhere close to what was promised, drilling should never take place in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We support the inclusion of the Arctic Refuge provision in the House Interior spending bill as well as bipartisan legislation introduced by Representatives Huffman (D-CA) and Fitzpatrick (R-PA) that would restore protections to the Arctic Refuge coastal plain.

No amount of money can replace this unparalleled national treasure or the caribou, polar bears, millions of birds and other wildlife that depend on it. It certainly can't replace the value of this land to the Gwich'in people who depend on the Porcupine caribou and refer to the coastal plain where caribou give birth each year as 'the sacred place where life begins.'"

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