March XX, 2021

Dear Senator/Representative:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we urge you to cosponsor the Arctic Refuge Protection Act (S. 282/H.R. 815). This critical legislation would restore essential protections for the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge while also safeguarding the subsistence rights of Arctic Indigenous peoples. A provision included in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 mandated two oil and gas lease sales for the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge and despite a failed first sale, without congressional action a second sale is mandated. By restoring protections to the coastal plain, this legislation sides with the vast majority of the American public who oppose oil and gas drilling in one of America’s greatest remaining wild places. Congress must take action to prevent the shortsighted destruction of this treasured wildlife refuge.

The Gwich’in people call the coastal plain “The Sacred Place Where Life Begins” and have relied for thousands of years on the Porcupine caribou that use it as their calving and nursery grounds. Oil and gas development threaten to alter caribou migration and population and destroy the coastal plain’s natural values, risking the way of life of the Gwich’in and other Indigenous peoples who rely on those values. Considered the biological heart of the Arctic Refuge, the coastal plain also provides critical denning habitat for the threatened Southern Beaufort Sea population of polar bears and nesting grounds for millions of migratory birds. As the most critical part of the Arctic Refuge’s delicate ecosystem, the coastal plain is a perfect example of a place that should be off-limits to oil drilling and industrial development.

Pro-drilling advocates claimed oil and gas leasing in the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge would provide a $1 billion offset to the 2017 Tax Act. These fraudulent assertions about projected revenues were disproven by the recent Arctic Refuge oil and gas lease sale held in January 2021. A complete financial failure, the lease sale only raised approximately $6 million for the U.S. Treasury, less than 1% of the $1 billion in revenue promised to American taxpayers. The lease sale also failed to receive industry interest, with only half of the tracts receiving bids, no major oil companies bidding, and the state of Alaska placing nearly all of the winning bids. Alaska is considered one of the most expensive sources of oil in the United States to produce, and with the six largest U.S. banks and two dozen international banks adopting policies to preclude financing for Arctic oil and gas development, it is no wonder companies are not interested in drilling in the Arctic Refuge.

Warming three times as fast as the global average, the Arctic is ground zero for climate change. Proposed oil development on the coastal plain threatens to release a carbon bomb, exploiting an estimated 10 billion barrels of oil, an amount which threatens to release 4.3 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent into the atmosphere. This is equivalent to the annual emissions from more than 1,100 coal-fired power plants and would contribute significantly to the climate crisis. Just the process of extracting oil and gas from the coastal plain alone would create an additional 26 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions throughout the development’s projected lifetime. We need legislation that protects intact ecosystems, not oil and gas development that poses serious biological, cultural and climate threats.

With a second lease sale mandated under the 2017 Tax Act, legislative action must be taken this Congress to prevent a second sale and restore protections for the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge. Shielding the coastal plain from oil and gas development has long been one of the highest profile conservation issues in the United States — we need to protect this irreplaceable land, now more than ever. It is up to us to preserve important places like this for our children’s children and to respect the Alaska Native cultures that have depended on these lands for generations. **We urge you to cosponsor the Arctic Refuge Protection Act to help protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from irreversible harm.**

Sincerely,

Gwich'in Steering Committee

Acadia Center

Advocates for the Environment

Akron Audubon

Alaska Wilderness League Action

Alliance for Climate Education

American Packrafting Association

Anthropocene Alliance

Arctic Audubon Society

Arkansas Valley Audubon Society

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Businesses for a Livable Climate

Call to Action Colorado

Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife

Cape Henry Audubon Society

CatholicNetwork.US

Center for Biological Diversity

Center For Sustainable Economy

Central Westchester Audubon Society

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Citizens’ Climate International

City of Boulder - Energy Task Force

Clean Energy Action

Clean Energy Action - Colorado

Clean Water Action

Climate Hawks Vote

Climate Law & Policy Project

Coalition of Refuge Friends and Advocates

Colorado Businesses for a Livable Climate

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes

Conservation Northwest

Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship

Cultural Survival

Cumberland-Harpeth Audubon Society

Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action

Defenders of Wildlife

Desert Rivers Audubon Society

Detroit Audubon

Dominican Sisters

Downeast Chapter of Maine Audubon

Earth Action, Inc.

Earth Ministry

EARTHDAY.ORG

Earthjustice

Earthworks

East Ozarks Audubon

Empower our Future

Endangered Species Coalition

Environment America

Environment California

Environment Colorado

Environment Connecticut

Environment Florida

Environment Georgia

Environment Illinois

Environment Maine

Environment Maryland

Environment Massachusetts

Environment Minnesota

Environment Nevada

Environment New Jersey

Environment North Carolina

Environment Oregon

Environment Texas

Environment Virginia

Environment Washington

Environmental Protection Information Center

Eyak Preservation Council

Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition

Families for a Livable Climate

Food & Water Watch

Fort Worth Audubon Society

Four Harbors Audubon Society

Franciscan Action Network

Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges

Friends of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of Kauai Wildlife Refuges

Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of the Earth

Friends of the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of the Mariana Trench

Friends of the Tampa Bay National wildlife Refuges

Friends of Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge Complex

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Genesee Valley Audubon Society

Georgia Interfaith Power and Light

Glasswaters Foundation

Grand Valley Audubon Board Member

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Greenpeace USA

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Hispanic Access Foundation

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Indigenous Environmental Network

Indivisible Anchorage

Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility

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International Fund for Animal Welfare

John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute

Kittitas Audubon

Klamath Forest Alliance

Lake County Audubon Society

League of Conservation Voters

Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Network

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Maine Conservation Voters

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Minnesota Audubon Society

Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Missouri River Bird Observatory

National Audubon Society

National Wildlife Federation

National Wildlife Refuge Association

Native Movement

Natural Resources Defense Council

Nelson Century Farms

North Cascades Audubon Society

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Northeastern Wisconsin Audubon Society

Northern Alaska Environmental Center

Nuclear Information and Resource Service

Oakland Audubon Society

Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society

Olympic Climate Action

Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society

Pacific Environment

Palos Verdes/South Bay Audubon Society

Patagonia

Pelican Island Audubon Society

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Polar Bears International

Prairie Rapids Audubon Society

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Rachel Carson Council

RapidShift Network

Raptors Are The Solution

Redbud Audubon Society

Region VI Coalition for Responsible Investment

San Diego Audubon Society

Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society

Santa Clara University

Save Our Illinois Land

Save the Canyons

Seeding Sovereignty

Seminole Audubon Society

Sierra Club

Sisters of Mary Reparatrix

Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York

South Mountain Audubon Society

Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society

Stanislaus Audubon Society

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Stand Up Alaska

Sustainable Tri-Cities

Tampa Audubon Society

Texas Campaign for the Environment

The Wilderness Society

Topeka Audubon Society

Trustees for Alaska

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Venice Area Audubon Society

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Vermont Conservation Voters

Veterans For Peace

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Washington Interfaith Power & Light

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Western Environmental Law Center

Western Watersheds Project

White River Group of Sierra Club

Winter Wildlands Alliance

Wisconsin Environment

Wisconsin Metro Audubon Society

Women's Earth and Climate Action Network

World Wildlife Fund

350 Hawaii

350 New Hampshire

350 Seattle

350 Vermont