

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

We write in response to the Department of the Interior's recent call for nominations of oil and gas parcels in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to express our strong opposition to proceeding with an Arctic Refuge lease sale. Such action would be inconsistent with fiscal responsibility, responsible stewardship of our public lands, and the obligation to protect taxpayers from unnecessary risk.

Previous lease sales in the Arctic Refuge have repeatedly demonstrated that drilling in this region is not economically viable and will not provide the revenues that American taxpayers were promised. The first lease sale, held in 2021, generated less than one percent of the \$1.8 billion in projected revenue.^{1,2} A second lease sale in 2025 fared even worse, receiving no bids at all.³ Today, the only lessee is a State of Alaska corporation; no oil and gas company holds leases on the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge.

These outcomes were not anomalies but rather reflect a clear and consistent lack of market interest in Arctic drilling. Major oil companies, including Chevron and BP, have walked away from their Arctic leases, in some cases paying millions of dollars to do so.⁴ Every major bank in the United States and Canada, along with a growing number of global insurers, have adopted policies declining to finance or underwrite drilling in the Arctic Refuge due to the extreme costs, remoteness, and legal uncertainty.⁵ Recent analysis by a nonpartisan fiscal watchdog underscores this reality, concluding that future lease

¹ T Hanlon and N Herz, "Major Oil Companies Take a Pass on Controversial Lease Sale in Arctic Refuge," *NPR*, January 6, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/06/953718234/major-oil-companies-take-a-pass-on-controversial-lease-sale-in-arctic-refuge>.

² DP Hasemyer and LS Friedman, "Biden Administration Suspends Oil Leasing in Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," *New York Times*, June 1, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/01/climate/biden-drilling-arctic-national-wildlife-refuge.html>.

³ Y Rosen, "Oil and Gas Lease Sale in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Draws No Bids," *Alaska Beacon*, January 8, 2025, <https://alaskabeacon.com/2025/01/08/oil-and-gas-lease-sale-in-alaskas-arctic-national-wildlife-refuge-draws-no-bids/>.

⁴ N Herz, "Two Oil Companies Quietly Spent \$10 Million to Exit Arctic Refuge Leases," *Anchorage Daily News*, May 27, 2022, <https://www.adn.com/business-economy/energy/2022/05/27/two-oil-companies-quietly-spent-10-million-to-exit-arctic-refuge-leases/>.

⁵ Y Rosen, "Insurance Giant AIG Joins Movement Against Financing Arctic Oil Development," *Arctic Today*, March 30, 2021, <https://www.arctictoday.com/insurance-giant-aig-joins-movement-against-financing-arctic-oil-development/>.

sales would generate only minimal revenue — likely no more than a few million dollars.⁶ As a Goldman Sachs analyst previously observed, “there is almost no rationale for Arctic exploration.”⁷

The only entity continuing to express interest in Arctic Refuge drilling is the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA), a state-owned development corporation with no capacity to develop oil and gas resources and a documented record of speculative investments that have cost Alaskans billions.⁸ Reliance on AIDEA to anchor oil and gas activities in the Arctic Refuge demonstrates that oil and gas leasing is unlikely to deliver the financial returns that have been promised.

In addition to these financial realities, the ecological significance of the Arctic Refuge cannot be overstated. The Coastal Plain is home to iconic wildlife, including polar bears and the Porcupine Caribou Herd, a critical subsistence resource for Alaska Native and Indigenous communities, particularly the Gwich’in people. Even preliminary activities, such as seismic exploration, risk causing lasting damage to this remote and highly sensitive landscape.

Taken together, these facts underscore a fundamental reality: oil and gas leasing in the Arctic Refuge has failed to generate meaningful revenue, failed to attract industry participation, and failed to demonstrate any realistic prospect of benefiting American taxpayers. Proceeding with additional lease sales under these conditions risks repeating a costly and unsuccessful experiment, while jeopardizing one of the world’s most significant natural landscapes and the communities that depend on it.

With the call for nominations now underway, meaningful public participation and robust Tribal consultation are essential, particularly given the subsistence and cultural importance of the Arctic Refuge to Alaska Native communities. Any nomination process must include early substantive engagement with impacted communities, and a sufficient public comment period before decisions with long-lasting consequences are made.

As the Department moves forward, we urge you to ensure that any actions related to Arctic Refuge leasing will be grounded in economic reality, free of undue financial risk for taxpayers, and reflective of the environmental and community considerations unique to this region. The repeated failure of prior lease sales makes clear that Arctic Refuge drilling is not a sound or reliable fiscal strategy and should not be pursued.

Sincerely,

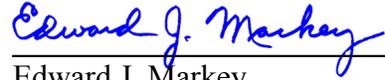
⁶ Taxpayers for Common Sense, *Learning From Past Mistakes: Arctic Refuge Leasing Is Not a Reliable Revenue Offset*, March 20, 2025, <https://www.taxpayer.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/3-20-25-ANWR-Learning-From-Past-Mistakes.pdf>.

⁷ G Acton, “There’s Almost Zero Rationale for Arctic Oil Exploration, Says Goldman Sachs,” *CNBC*, March 23, 2017, <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/03/23/theres-almost-zero-rationale-for-arctic-oil-exploration-says-goldman-sachs.html>.

⁸ C Schreck, “Economic Report Slams AIDEA’s Investment Decisions,” *KTUU*, September 28, 2022, <https://www.alaskasnewsresource.com/2022/09/28/economic-report-slams-aideas-investment-decisions/>.



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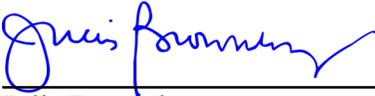
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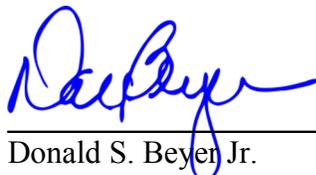
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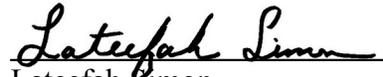
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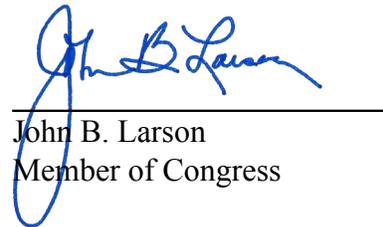
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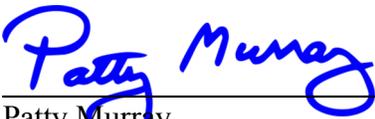
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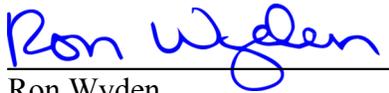
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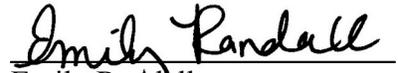
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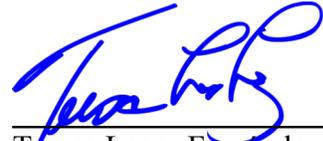
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