

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 22, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your leadership and for helping Congress advance significant investments for the American people through budget reconciliation. The Build Back Better Act is a generational opportunity to make historic investments in federal programs and address the multiple crises facing our nation in ways that create millions of good-paying jobs and put us on a path to net-zero emissions by 2050.

Congressional committees are currently writing, debating, and voting on standalone pieces of legislation that will be compiled into the final Build Back Better Act. On September 9, the House Natural Resources Committee successfully advanced its portion of the Build Back Better Act, which includes a provision that repeals the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil and gas leasing program and buys back the leases issued in January 2021 under the previous administration.¹ It's critical this provision be included in the final text that reaches your desk, and we ask for your leadership and assistance in ensuring it remains in the Build Back Better Act as negotiations between the House and Senate continue in the coming weeks.

For decades, Congressional Republicans made opening the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling one of their top energy priorities. The coastal plain is considered the “biological heart” of the Arctic Refuge, providing important denning habitat for polar bears and calving ground for caribou and hosting more than 200 species of migratory birds each year. For the Gwich'in people, who do not live in the coastal plain but depend on the Porcupine Caribou Herd for subsistence, the coastal plain is “the sacred place where life begins.” But despite its biological, environmental, and cultural significance, the oil and gas industry peddled the idea to the public that the Refuge can fuel America's economy and fill our gas tanks.

In 2017, Congressional Republicans achieved their long-sought goal by attaching an Arctic Refuge oil and gas provision to their Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which cleared the Senate through budget reconciliation. The law directed the Department of the Interior to establish an oil and gas leasing program for the Arctic Refuge and conduct two lease sales within the next decade.² As part of the 2017 budget reconciliation process, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that opening the Arctic Refuge to drilling would raise \$1.1 billion in federal revenues over ten years, and Republicans used this score to offset a portion of their tax cuts for corporations and the super-wealthy.

¹ “Committee Approves \$25.6 Billion Reconciliation Measure to Fund Climate Corps, Coastal Protection, Wildfire Management, Tribal & Territorial Needs.” *House Natural Resources Committee*. Sept. 9, 2021. <https://naturalresources.house.gov/media/press-releases/committee-approves-256-billion-reconciliation-measure-to-fund-climate-corps-coastal-protection-wildfire-management-tribal-and-territorial-needs>

² Sec. 20001 of PL 115-97

On January 6, 2021, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) conducted the first of two required lease sales for the Arctic Refuge that generated just \$12.1 million, half of which went to the federal government – a tiny fraction of the \$1.1 billion promised in the Tax Act.³ This lease sale demonstrated that the American people were deceived by Republicans in 2017 when they opened the Arctic Refuge to pay for more than \$1 billion in corporate tax cuts. Given its remote nature, and combined with the growing global drive to limit carbon pollution, drilling in the coastal plain is an unwise financial decision and an expensive and entirely unnecessary risk for U.S. taxpayers. The financial risks are so clear that all major banks in the U.S. and Canada are among the two dozen worldwide that have announced they will not fund any new oil and gas development in the Refuge. The banks know it, and major oil companies know it: drilling in the Refuge doesn't make financial sense and isn't worth the risks.

Nearly four years after the CBO estimated opening the Refuge to drilling would generate billions of dollars for U.S. taxpayers, they recently informed Congress that the provision passed by the House Natural Resources Committee would likely cost less than \$50 million over the next decade. Allowing more leasing and drilling in the Arctic Refuge to move forward is a terrible financial investment for U.S. taxpayers, but spending tens of millions of dollars to protect this region is a wise investment that would enormously benefit our nation.

The passage of this provision out of the Committee is a key step in our efforts to repeal the Arctic Refuge oil and gas leasing program, and we ask for your support in guaranteeing it remains in the final Build Back Better Act text that you sign into law. Thank you again for your continued leadership through the reconciliation process, and we stand ready to work with you to protect both the interests of U.S. taxpayers and our nation's precious public lands.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Chair
Committee on Natural
Resources



Jared Huffman
Chair
Subcommittee on Water,
Oceans, & Wildlife

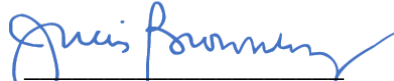


Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

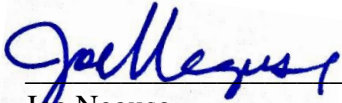
³ Fountain, Henry. "Sale of drilling leases in Arctic Refuge Fails to Yield a Windfall." *The New York Times*. Jan. 6, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/06/climate/arctic-refuge-drilling-lease-sales.html>



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



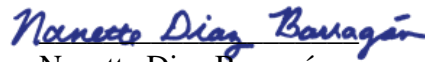
Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



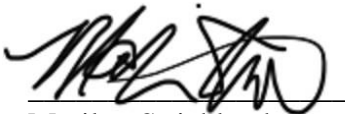
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Marilyn Strickland
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



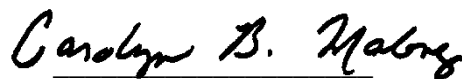
Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



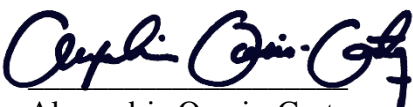
Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



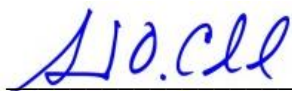
Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



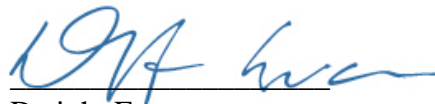
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Karen Bass
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



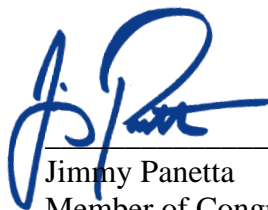
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress




Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



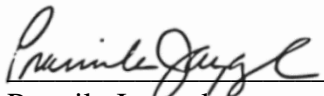
André Carson
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress



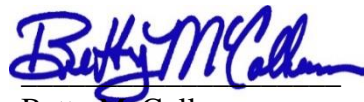
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



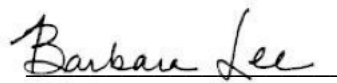
Mike Levin
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



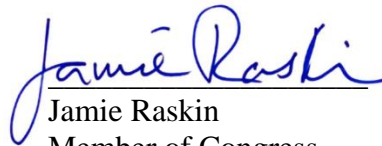
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Mondaire Jones
Member of Congress



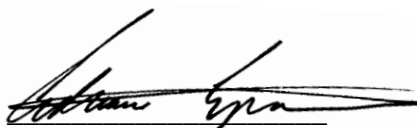
Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



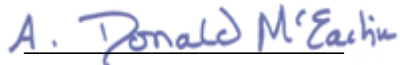
Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress



A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress



Cori Bush
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



Ted Lieu
Member of Congress



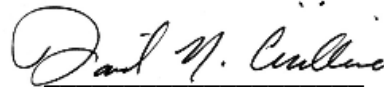
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



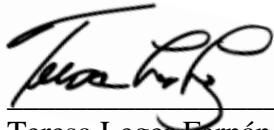
Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress




Adam Smith
Member of Congress

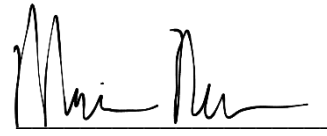


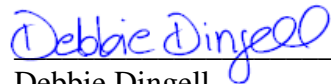
David Trone
Member of Congress



Ed Case
Member of Congress


Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress


Marie Newman
Member of Congress


Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress