



December 5, 2023

Mr. Peter Stauber
Chairman
U.S. House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I write to you today as follow up to and in support of recent testimony by two of our members, the Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS) and the Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation (KIC), about the impact of the administration's recent decisions to restrict 13 million acres of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A), release over 1,400 pages for a draft supplemental environmental impact statement for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), and rescind seven oil and gas leases in ANWR. I also wish to express our organization's support for the bipartisan HR 6285, "Alaska's Right to Produce Act."

As you know, the Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOICE) is a nonprofit organization established in 2015 by the region's collective elected Iñupiat leadership to speak with a unified voice on issues impacting the North Slope Iñupiat, our communities, our economy, and our culture. Together, we preserve and advance North Slope Iñupiat cultural and economic self-determination.

VOICE's member organizations, save ICAS, are all either direct or indirect creations due to the federal government's passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. Our 24 members include the elected leadership of local governments, Alaska Native Corporations, tribes, and tribal nonprofits across the North Slope of Alaska. Our membership includes the North Slope Borough, the regional municipal government for an area as large as the state of Minnesota, which has taxing authority over the infrastructure for development within the North Slope and is the largest employer in our region.

This administration's recent actions affecting our ancestral homelands in NPR-A and ANWR underscore the importance of our work to unite and amplify North Slope Iñupiat voices. It is imperative that the federal government listen to and engage with the elected leadership of Kaktovik, the only community located within the entire 19.6 million acres of ANWR, to understand the significant impact of its ANWR rulings on Kaktovik's future of both their community and culture. We support Kaktovik's right to pursue responsible resource development on North Slope Iñupiat land, and our Board of Directors, which is made up of elected Iñupiat leadership representing communities across the North Slope issued a resolution supporting these activities in the 1002 area of the Coastal Plain in 2017.

VOICE also represents Utqiagvik, Atkasuk, Nuiqsut, and Wainwright, the only communities located within NPR-A. The administration's decision to place nearly 13 million acres within NPR-A into special protected status will undoubtedly shrink economic opportunities available to these communities and set

back their journey to self-determination, including the viability of the communities themselves. Earlier this year, our Board issued a resolution in support of the Willow Project and the North Slope Iñupiat's right to develop our ancestral homelands within NPR-A, where Willow will be located.

Further, pursuant to a motion by VOICE's Board, our organization has made substantial efforts to engage with the federal government on issues that have significant impact on our culture, economy, and communities, including the actions regarding ANWR and NPR-A which are the subject of HR6285. Our efforts are exemplified by my testimony before your subcommittee in September, during which I stated that the administration's recent actions in NPR-A and ANWR – taken in the name of environmental justice – are anything but just, and instead represent a continuation of more than 50 years of policymaking that cares little for the rights and self-determination of the North Slope Iñupiat who call these lands home.

Last week, you heard from VOICE members ICAS and KIC in support of the bipartisan HR 6285, its benefits to our communities, and its efforts to preserve and advance our self-determination. We stand firmly behind KIC President Charles Lampe's comments that Kaktovik "unapologetically supports the leasing program" in the 1002 area, as well as ICAS Secretary Doreen Leavitt's comments noting that "it is unfortunate this bill is necessary" in light of the administration's negligence of our elected leadership and being the only communities located within the affected areas.

Quyanaqpak for championing our cause and supporting the affected communities in ANWR and NPR-A by sponsoring this bipartisan legislation alongside Alaska's sole representative, Mary Sattler Peltola, and Alaska's Senators, who sponsored the Senate companion to HR 6285. VOICE unequivocally supports HR 6285 and looks forward to future engagement with you and your colleagues on this issue.

Sincerely,



Nagruk Harcharek
President
Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat

Cc: U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan
U.S. Representative Mary Sattler Peltola