



RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Growing Alaska Through Responsible Resource Development

September 15, 2023

Honorable Bruce Westerman
U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Proposed NPR-A and ANWR Lease Cancellations

Dear Chairman Westerman:

On behalf of the Resource Development Council for Alaska (RDC), please accept this letter for the record for the upcoming hearing on September 19, 2023: *“Examining the Biden Administration’s Mismanagement of the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Program.”* For the following reasons, RDC supports taking every step necessary to reverse the recent actions by the Biden Administration proposing to cancel all remaining leases in the 1002 Area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and limiting future lease sales for oil and gas development in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) under the misleadingly named proposed rule for the “Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska” (hereafter the proposed rule). See, 88 Fed. Reg. 62025

As an initial matter, let me introduce you to the RDC. The RDC is an Alaskan statewide business association comprised of individuals and companies from Alaska’s fishing, tourism, forestry, mining, and oil and gas industries. RDC’s membership proudly includes all twelve Alaska Native regional corporations formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA), local governments and communities, organized and non-organized labor, industry support firms, nonprofit organizations, and much, much more. Since 1975, RDC’s mission has been to grow Alaska through the responsible development of our natural resources. Our purpose in driving this mission is to encourage a strong, diversified private sector in Alaska and expand the state’s economic base. With more than 700 members, our members support nearly every job in every sector of our state economy.

RDC strongly condemns the Administration’s recent announcement from the Department of Interior to cancel current and future oil and gas leases in the ANWR. This ill-advised and, in our opinion, illegal decision not only undermines Alaska’s economic prospects but guarantees even more energy production will move overseas. The Biden Administration claims to be committed to a clean energy future, yet they have taken the inexplicable step of locking up one of the safest, most environmentally careful locations in the world for responsible development. Alaska is proud of the environmental, safety, and labor record for its oil and gas industry on Alaska’s North Slope (ANS). For decades, development of this resource has been balanced with indigenous and subsistence lifestyles. Many communities, including indigenous Alaska Native and tribal villages, located within ANS support oil and gas development. The discovery of oil on ANS has been transformational to the quality of life in this region as a source of revenue generation for those living in some of the harshest living environments in the world. By shutting the



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door on this opportunity, the Administration is doing a disservice not only to the environment but also the American people, including Alaskans and Alaska Native peoples and their communities.

These actions are the latest in a string of broken promises to Alaska. Sadly, it is a trend that Alaskans have come to expect from the federal government. Time and again, we have been assured that our voices and concerns will be heard, and our right to economic self-determination protected. However, this Administration continues to lock up our lands and stifle our potential for growth and prosperity while simultaneously increasing the U.S.'s reliance on foreign oil during a time of painfully high energy costs.

This move also sends a chilling message to potential investors and industry stakeholders. It creates an atmosphere of chaos, where laws and decisions made today may be arbitrarily thrown out tomorrow depending on who wins elections. This uncertainty discourages investment in Alaska's energy sector and results in an investment climate where capital is sidelined. Such continual upheaval jeopardizes jobs and economic growth and hinders the United States' path to energy security.

Ironically, as the Administration locks up domestic energy resources, it forces even greater reliance on energy imports from countries that lack our robust environmental standards and actively oppose U.S. interests. This is a dangerous and counterproductive move that not only jeopardizes our national security but also undermines the Administration's professed commitment to addressing climate change on a global scale. Just a few weeks ago, China and Russia sent warships to cruise off the coast of Alaska. Now is not the time to further weaken our ability to produce domestic energy, which allows the U.S. to better defend itself.

Furthermore, these actions go against federal law. In 1923, Congress specifically set aside and designated the NPR-A, an area larger than the state of Maine, to ensure American energy independence. The 23 million acre reserve was specifically set aside nearly a century ago for its petroleum value. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates the reserve could hold as much as 9 billion barrels of oil. Given the vast resources estimated to be in the NPR-A, future production from Willow and other fields in the NPR-A could reverse recent declines in throughput in the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS), maintaining its viability for decades to come. The proposed rule seeks to prevent use of the NPR-A for the exact purpose for which Congress established it. Similarly, the Administration's efforts to cancel leases in the 1002 Area are also in contravention of Congress's clear directive passed under Title II of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (PL 115-97).

RDC believes it is possible to meet the nation's energy needs, protect the environment, and foster economic growth in Alaska, all while reducing energy reliance from countries that do not share our values or interests. We believe this because our record proves it to be true. Thank you for your oversight of the Biden Administration's recent actions which threaten Alaska's economy and undermine efforts to ensure our energy independence and national security.

Resourcefully,



Leila Kimbrell
Executive Director