

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 20, 2018

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

Dear Secretary Zinke,

We write to express our concerns with the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) efforts to allow oil and gas activities in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Since the Refuge was originally set aside for protection in 1960 by Republican President Dwight Eisenhower, Republicans, Democrats and Independents alike have stood together and vigorously fought to protect this unparalleled landscape. We have reservations about any effort to develop this pristine landscape and opposed the circumstances under which this controversial environmental issue was authorized last year, attached to an unrelated tax reconciliation bill. Last year's vote did not allow for the full and fair debate that this issue deserves given its essential role in America's conservation history. We write today asking that you provide adequate time for a thorough review to give this iconic landscape the rigorous consideration it deserves before any decisions are made to move forward.

This expedited process is especially problematic given the fundamental incompatibility between oil and gas activities and the original purposes for which the Arctic Refuge was established. The tax bill did not waive existing environmental laws that apply to the Coastal Plain, and BLM must provide for the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats, to maintain the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge. Any regulatory process requires thoughtful input and consideration of public comments; unfortunately, the current process is not adequate, and does not live up to this standard. This could put the Arctic Refuge — the crown jewel of our National Wildlife Refuge System — in a vulnerable position to be exploited and destroyed.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of the most pristine places left in America today, home to musk oxen, wolves, imperiled polar bears, and nearly 200 species of migratory birds that migrate to six continents and all 50 states. The Refuge's coastal plain is the calving ground for the majestic Porcupine Caribou Herd, which has sustained the Gwich'in people's way of life for thousands of years. Any development footprint in the Refuge stands to disrupt this fragile, critically important landscape and the future of the Gwich'in.

Again, we have serious concerns with the administration's efforts to allow oil and gas development in this iconic place, especially given the circumstances under which this program was authorized. There is no doubt that this type of environmental review could threaten imperiled species and permanently damage the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain. We ask that you ensure a more careful review of all aspects of the oil and gas lease program. This issue is due the full process it was denied last year, and you are in the position to make that happen.

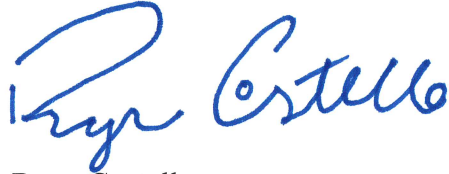
Sincerely,



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Dave Reichert
Member of Congress



Ryan Costello
Member of Congress



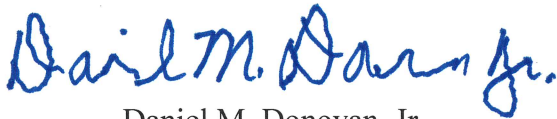
Frank LoBiondo
Member of Congress



Mark Sanford
Member of Congress



John J. Faso
Member of Congress



Daniel M. Donovan, Jr.
Member of Congress