

Alaska State Legislature

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Special Committee on Arctic, Economic Development,
and Tourism, Chair
Resources Committee, Vice Chair
Community and Regional Affairs Committee
Special Committee on Energy

Representative Dean Westlake

Sponsor Statement **CS for House Joint Resolution 5**

“Urging the United States Congress to pass legislation to open the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development; urging the United States Department of the Interior to recognize the private property rights of owners of land in and adjacent to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; relating to oil and gas exploration, development, production, and royalties; and relating to renewable and alternative energy technologies.”

Upon passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act by Congress (ANILCA, 1980), 1.5 Million acres within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) was set aside specifically for future consideration of oil and gas development. Section 1002 of ANILCA specifies that development of these resources must be approved by an act of Congress.

In 1998 the United States Geological Survey studied the 1002 area of ANWR and estimated that it contained over 10 Billion barrels of oil reserves. Though multiple attempts have been made in Congress to open the area it has remained closed to oil and gas development.

The primary argument against opening the 1002 area has been its possible effects on the Porcupine Caribou herd. Similar arguments were made prior to development in Prudhoe Bay. However, multiple studies have concluded that the Central Alaska caribou herd has remained strong.

As overall Alaska oil production has declined on the North Slope the development of additional oil fields becomes increasingly important to maintain the Trans Alaska Pipeline’s (TAPS) economic viability. TAPS is not only a critical piece of infrastructure for Alaska, it remains a critical component of the United States overall energy portfolio.

HJR 5 urges Congress to take action and open the 1002 Area to oil and gas development and to do so in ways that protect local residents as well as the Porcupine Caribou herd. HJR 5 serves as a continuing reminder to Congress that opening this area is in Alaska’s best interest and in the best interest of the Nation. I humbly ask for your support.