

March 7, 2019

The Alaska House of Representatives  
House Resources Committee  
Thirty-First Legislature

RE: House Joint Resolution 7

Chair Representative Tarr and Co-Chair Representative Lincoln,

I am writing to you today as the President of Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOICE) to respectfully ask the House to pass Joint Resolution 7 supporting the work of the Bureau of Land Management as it works toward an oil and gas leasing program in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. VOICE is a 501(c)(4) non-profit corporation whose twenty members include the representatives of federally-recognized tribes, municipal governments, Alaska Native corporations, a regional non-profit, and the tribal college from the North Slope of Alaska. Collectively, we represent the broad leadership of the region.

The North Slope region of Alaska stretches across a region that is roughly the size of Wyoming. The Iñupiat people have occupied this place since time immemorial. Though no treaty was ever signed, vast tracts of land were set aside for various purposes by the Federal Government. One of these areas – the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) – was set aside by the Federal Government at the behest of organizations far to the south of our region.

In 2017, in support of VOICE members the Native Village of Kaktovik and Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation, VOICE passed a unanimous resolution to actively petition Congress to open the Coastal Plain of ANWR to measured oil and gas development. As the only federally recognized tribe within the bounds of a National Wildlife Refuge, Kaktovik has long been prevented from exercising economic self-determination by developing their own lands due to restrictions imposed by outside interest groups.

As you may know, our region is unique in that over 95% of the revenue that our regional government generates today – revenue that is used to provide critical services, such as schools, health care, public safety, and infrastructure services to our communities – comes directly from oil and gas within the region. In response to the Chair's remarks posed to Kaktovikmiut elder Fenton Rexford during the public testimony on the phone March 6<sup>th</sup> regarding the negligence of the State in not providing these services to North Slope communities, we would like to clarify that it's our regional government, the North Slope Borough, who is able to provide these

services to our people in a culturally responsible way that is specific to our region. It's through the boroughs tax authority that allows the State of Alaska to provide more resources to other rural communities that do not have the same economic opportunities.

Our leaders have worked tirelessly since the discovery of Prudhoe Bay in the 1960's to minimize the footprint of development and secure the health of our communities, our land, and our fish and wildlife populations. In our over 50 years of experience cultivating this vital balance between economic opportunities and our traditional subsistence culture, and our success in ensuring the health of 3 separate caribou herds with industry infrastructure, we feel that a harmony can be struck in the Coastal Plain between development activities and the health of both human and wildlife communities well into the future.

VOICE is supportive of safe and culturally responsible resource development within our region, though we realize that these activities can only be allowed to occur when the preservation of our way of life, our food security, and our subsistence culture are protected. Kaktovik is no different; and Kaktovik has made a judgement that measured oil and gas development within their region can benefit their community through opportunities for local jobs and their developing their local economy. We feel that is very telling that when a question was poised to a testifier yesterday representing a local environmental organization what their organization's position is on providing jobs for the community of Kaktovik, they had no answer.

We know better than anybody how beautiful and special our homelands are, but the people – the Kaktovikmiut – must not be left out of this conversation. Before all else, the Coastal Plain is the home of the Kaktovikmiut. We support the efforts of the Federal Government as it works through the Environmental Impact Statement to develop an oil and gas leasing program for the Coastal Plain, they have been diligent in engaging the all communities as they work through their process.

Quyanaqpak, we thank you very much for listening and your consideration of the voices of the local people on this very important issue to our region and to the community of Kaktovik.

Taikuu,



Sayers Tuzroyluk, Sr.  
President