



ANWR:

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Support for H.J.R. 11 27th Alaska State Legislature 1st Session

Arctic Power strongly supports House Joint Resolution 11 introduced to the Alaska State Legislature Jan 21, 2011.

At the opening of each Congress for the past ten years, bills have been introduced to declare the 10-02 area of ANWR “wilderness lands” as defined by the National Wilderness Act of 1964. To date not a single measure has gained support and most have died in committee. Additionally letters have been drafted by Congressmen to the President to either declare the 10-02 as wilderness or, in one case, ban all development of any kind north of the Brooks Range. These letters are often signed by 50-80 congressmen and women and are sent off to the White House. None have yet gained enough traction to cause passage of legislation.

Despite the lack of success in these measures, and that many on Capitol Hill brand these attempts as politically “dead-on-arrival”, the fact remains that up to a third of the US Senate and a quarter of the US House actually believe that locking up Alaskan lands is a good thing and Alaskans simply do not know what is best for themselves when it comes to land management. Sadly, very few of those who sign these letters or bills have actually been to Alaska, let alone ANWR, and many support these bills purely on political grounds. As a fact we at Arctic Power know that very few Congressmen or women actually know the issues, the lands, or the history of Arctic oil and gas exploration at all.

As ANWR is the single most legislated energy issue of the modern era, HJR 11 will be a extremely important voice for the people of Alaska in responding to the misguided wishes of certain members of Congress keen on Federal land grabs. It is the voice of the people of Alaska that is often not heard in the Halls of Congress and deliberately left out the ANWR “wilderness” letters sent to the White House. HJR 11 will be an official message that we, as residents of this state, can take to Washington to help assure our voices are heard.

After ANILCA passed in 1980, Alaska was given reason to breathe a sigh of relief, though at a cost of 105 million acres of our state's land. Today 61% of our state is controlled by Washington and fully 1/3rd of all Federal lands nationally lie in Alaska. Over half of all national wilderness lands or fifty-eight million acres exist in Alaska including 8 million acres (42%) of ANWR itself. Alaska also contains 70% of the nation's national parks and 80% of all the nation's wildlife refuge land. One must ask when is enough enough? Regardless of the rule of law of ANILCA itself, we simply do not need more protected lands.

Demands for wilderness designation of the 10-02 area by anyone inside or outside of Alaska completely and deliberately ignores that Alaskans, both individually and through laws put in place by their elected officials, have acted responsibly and practiced careful conservation and protection of the ecology for 30 years across the entire Arctic. The environmental Armageddon many environmental groups preached never happened. But still, those in favor of 10-02 wilderness designation artfully ignore the now 66,000 strong Central Arctic Caribou Herd migrating, calving and feeding within the largest oil field on the North American continent. A situation which was deemed impossible by the environmental lobby and their supporters in 1972.

Apart from the basic fact that ANILCA specifically did not designate the 10-02 as wilderness lands, ANILCA also states that the Federal Government's fill of claims to Alaskan lands have been met and that no Alaskan land, anywhere in the state, may be taken out of public use without a specific decision by Congress. In 1987, the Department of Interior carried out the letter of the law of ANILCA and recommended opening the 10-02 to oil exploration and development, and; in 1995, Congress fulfilled ANILCA by voting to do so. What has changed since then with regard to ANWR land is almost nothing at all. The Porcupine Caribou Herd fluctuates, as it always has and will, the local governments still strongly support development and overall statewide public support remains at a high 78%. Yet Alaska, year in year out, must battle against bill after bill, letter after letter, campaign after campaign the attempts of environmentalists and misguided US Congressmen and women to keep open the option to responsibly use our lands. Even the current Comprehensive Conservation Plan by the US Fish and Wildlife Service will most likely break the ANILCA law and, in April, come out with a recommendation for a wilderness designation of the 10-02 area. It is our great wish that this effort be stopped, that the US Fish and Wildlife Service know through HJR 11 and the force of law that this is not only not the wish of Alaskans, but it is also against the law of the land.

We at Arctic Power do not agree with those in the US Congress who want wilderness designation for the 10-02 area. We strongly believe they do not fully understand the issue and many are completely unwilling to listen to the voices of the people of Alaska.

We at Arctic Power do believe Alaskans know what is best for Alaskans and that a vast majority of Alaskans support passage of HJR 11 and responsible development of the 10-02 area of ANWR. We strongly support this resolution and recommend its passage.

Sincerely

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