

April 5, 2013  
Senator Kevin Meyer  
Co-Chair Senate Finance Committee  
State Capitol Room 518  
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: HB 77

Dear Senator Meyer:

There are a number of bills being considered this legislative session that change the process for development throughout the state, including HB 77 in the Senate Finance Committee. The changes proposed in this bill will have sweeping effects across the state and villages like mine will be greatly impacted. Specifically, this bill will sacrifice Alaskan's rights to participate in natural resource decisions with less public oversight and input.

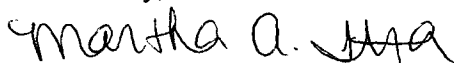
I am writing on behalf of the Nuiqsut Tribal Council, a federally recognized tribe and the governing body in the Native Village of Nuiqsut. In just a short period of time our entire village has transformed because of oil and gas development on state lands. Once already we have had to relocate, and drill rigs are placed closer and closer to the community. The nearest drill rig is just 4 miles from town. This has severely impacted my village's traditional hunting grounds, which extended in all directions including beyond Alpine through Prudhoe Bay, also because oil and gas activities are allowed to occur during summer and winter seasons during critical subsistence harvesting times. The public should continue to have a voice in future development projects, as we have to fight for our subsistence rights, land, and even clean air and water while these projects occur.

This bill, if passed, will weaken meaningful opportunities for public participation in natural resource decision making by eroding standards within the state's regulatory process. Most notably, this bill would remove mandatory notice and comment periods for preliminary Best Interest Findings (BIF). Taken with another bill being considered, SB 59, which would remove necessary BIFs from later phases of oil and gas projects, the public input on projects gets disregarded. This bill also limits who can participate in the administrative process to challenge flawed decisions.

This bill would also deny the public's right to in-stream flow reservations that protect salmon habitat. The Native Village of Nuiqsut is home to rich and diverse fisheries, including king salmon, silver salmon, white fish, chum salmon, geryling, bering cisco, broad white fish, arctic char, arctic cisco, burbot, and more. DNR routinely processes water use applications for mining, oil, and gas corporations but almost never processes in-stream flow applications to keep water in the streams for fish. The legislature should recognize that Native Villages, local governments, and all Alaskans have the right to healthy salmon by keeping the right to in-stream flow reservations.

In order to protect the rights of our tribes and the public to have required and meaningful input, I urge the Senate Finance Committee to vote against HB 77. Protect the rights of Alaskans.

Sincerely,



Cc:

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