



## Congress Shamefully Opens Arctic Refuge to Oil & Gas Drilling

*Reversing Decades of Protections, GOP Tax Bill Puts Profits Before Protections and Corporations Before America's Last Frontier and Alaska Natives*

December 20, 2017

Washington, D.C. Today is a devastating day for the wildlife and people who depend upon the [Arctic National Wildlife Refuge](#). The House- and Senate-passed tax bill includes opening the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas drilling. The GOP-led Congress didn't have the votes to pass a stand-alone Arctic Refuge drilling bill, so they attached it to the tax plan as a way to pass the legislation by a simple majority.

But the majority of Americans don't want to destroy our Last Frontier, and urged Congress to remove the provision. All but 12 Republicans in the House and all Republicans in the Senate didn't listen – they listened to their wealthy donors who received a windfall in tax breaks at the expense of one of the last truly wild places left on Earth.

“What Congress has done today, has shown that they have no regard for the [Gwich'in people](#) and their way of life, and America's wildlife heritage,” said Geoffrey Haskett, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. “By their actions, they have told the Gwich'in that their way of life is not as important as oil revenue and they have told future generations of Americans that preserving our nation's Last Frontier is not important enough to save. Simply put, greed won over conservation.”

While today we chastise a government that does not listen to its people, this is not the end of the fight to save the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Arctic Refuge is too important to sit back and allow oil companies to pillage its resources.

The fight to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has just begun. For almost 60 years, the Arctic Refuge has remained protected because of the support of the American people. Despite this vote, we stand ready to fight for America's last great wilderness for our children and grandchildren. We will not for a moment forsake our commitment to defend this irreplaceable, iconic and deeply cherished landscape. We will do everything in our power to keep the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge a 'place where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man'.

We will work with the Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges and other conservation partners to urge a future Congress to overturn this decision. We will urge oil companies to abandon any thought of drilling in such an iconic place - if need be, we will ask the American people to boycott

such companies. We will increase our efforts to raise the awareness with the American people about what we have to lose should oil rigs be allowed into the Refuge. We will use the words of those who came before us and spoke eloquent words to Congress that resonate today. “I hope that the United States of America is not so rich that she can afford to let these wildernesses pass by- or so poor that she cannot afford to keep them.”- *Mardy Murie, Alaska Lands Bill testimony June 5, 1977 in Denver, Colorado.*

[Join us](#) as we open a new door in our fight to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge!

###

*The National Wildlife Refuge Association is the only independent nonprofit that promotes and protects the largest wildlife conservation network: the National Wildlife Refuge System. Learn more at: [refugeassociation.org](http://refugeassociation.org) or contact [Desirée Sorenson-Groves](#).*