

May 12, 2016

Honorable Don Young
U.S. Representative
State of Alaska
2314 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Proposed Bill to Re-codify Federal Wildlife Statutes into Title 56 of the U.S. Code

Dear Congressman Young,

On behalf of Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOAI), I write you out of concern over the bill before the House Judiciary Committee which proposes the re-codifying of Federal Wildlife Statutes into Title 56 of the United States (U.S.) Code. As a fellow Alaskan with deep regard for the Alaska Native population and our subsistence way of life, I request that you hold this bill until the local stakeholders have sufficient time to review and provide feedback to Congress in order to best protect our subsistence rights.

VOAI is a newly formed 501(c)4 non-profit corporation whose twenty members include representatives from North Slope tribal councils, municipal governments, Alaska Native Corporations, a regional non-profit and the tribal college from the North Slope of Alaska. VOA I was formed to provide a unified, local voice of the Iñupiat people from the Arctic Slope region. VOA I was established in 2015 with the purpose of providing local advocacy and engagement of the Iñupiat people to state, federal and international forums addressing Arctic issues. With respect to our continued subsistence activities, this bill fits within this framework and warrants our attention.

VOAI is intended to articulate local content and responses with respect to activities within our region that allow for the protection of our land, waters and subsistence resources based on our knowledge and experience. VOA I is represented by the elected leadership of twenty North Slope organizations. It is through our member organizations that we can speak with a unified voice for the people of the Arctic. It is

Member Organizations

Arctic Slope Native Association	City of Anaktuvuk Pass	City of Point Hope	Native Village of Atqasuk	Olgoonik Corporation
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation	City of Atqasuk	City of Wainwright	Native Village of Point Lay	Tikigaq Corporation
Atqasuk Corporation	City of Barrow	Ilisaġvik College	North Slope Borough	Ukpeaġvik Iñupiat Corporation
	City of Kaktovik	Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation	Nunamuit Corporation	Wainwright Tribal Council

through this voice that we urge you to consider the potential impacts to our subsistence culture if the bill before the House Judiciary Committee is successful.

The proposed bill seeks to consolidate all Federal wildlife statutes into a single statute which would make these statutes easier to find. While this “house-keeping” action seems innocuous in nature, VOAI notes that key subsistence provisions will be relocated which will reduce their accessibility and diminish their importance as it relates to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). VOAI is particularly concerned over the Native Exemption which allows for indigenous peoples to continue our tradition of subsistence hunting within a MMPA moratorium. All of the communities in the North Slope region participate in subsistence hunting; however, this rule is acutely relative to those communities which lie on the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas and engage in marine subsistence hunts. It is essential that these rights continue to be protected as they are deeply significant to the preservation of our Iñupiat communities and culture.

An unintended consequence of this recodification could reduce the perceived significance of this exemption, and, as a result, have adverse impacts on the subsistence lifestyle of the Iñupiat people. Because of these reasons, VOAI respectfully request that this bill be held until collaboration between the Iñupiat people, VOAI, Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC), Alaska Marine Mammal Coalition (AMMC), and lawmakers occurs. VOAI looks forward to contributing thoughtful suggestions to Congress during our review of this bill in order that the best product may be produced which meets the goal of this bill while protecting the subsistence culture of the Iñupiat peoples.

We appreciate your continue support and advocacy for all of the Alaskans, especially the Iñupiat people, and look forward to your continued engagement on this matter. As such, VOAI supports AEWC and AMMC comments on this proposed bill. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Taikuu,



Sayers Tuzroyluk, Sr.
President

cc: Congressman Bob Goodlatte
Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Dan Sullivan

Mike Aamodt, Mayor, North Slope Borough
Harry Brower, Jr., Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission