

June 24, 2016

Honorable Governor Bill Walker
PO Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Governor Walker,

My name is Sayer Tuzroyluk, Sr. and I am the President of Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (“VOAI”). VOA I is a 501(c)4 non-profit organization established to provide direct input from the Iñupiat people in matters of Arctic policy. VOA I’s membership includes 20 of the 28 entities from across the North Slope - including tribal councils, municipal governments and Alaska Native corporations. VOA I reflects our Arctic priorities during a time when it seems many outside voices are demanding policy initiatives that do not reflect our needs, and in fact have the potential to adversely impact our people and our Arctic communities.

I write to you today regarding a letter penned by 388 scientists in response to the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management’s (“BOEM’s”) Proposed 2017-2022 Leasing Program for the Outer Continental Shelf. I have attached this letter for your convenience. Specifically, these scientists demanded that BOEM exclude both the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas from the leasing. Several Alaskan entities, including a scientist from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and twenty-six professors from the University of Alaska Fairbanks signed this letter.

This concerns me in several ways.

We have historically invited scientists into our region to conduct research in the Arctic and into our homes while doing so, yet we very rarely get the results of those studies. We have long considered western scientific research combined with our traditional or indigenous knowledge an important contributor to meaningful decisions made with input from our people and region. Some of these researchers are considered friends and I am now appalled that this same group of scientists

Member Organizations

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Arctic Slope Regional Corporation	City of Atkasuk	Iļisagvik College	North Slope Borough	Ukpeagvik Iñupiat Corporation
Atkasuk Corporation	City of Barrow	Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation	Nunamiut Corporation	Wainwright Tribal Council
	City of Katktovik	Native Village of Atkasuk	Olgoonik Corporation	
	City of Point Hope	Native Village of Point Hope		

think they know us enough to speak on our behalf about our region and usurp our voice without our knowledge to describe our ‘vibrant communities’. This is unacceptable and patronizing to the Iñupiat.

I am not a whaling captain but I play a very essential role on a crew in Point Hope that strives for successful harvest to feed our people. As with all our communities on the North Slope people work very hard together and celebrate the success when a whale has given itself to us. We understand the benefit for a cautious approach as our culture and food source is essential to our livelihood. As you know, all of the communities of the North Slope rely on subsistence to nourish our communities throughout the year.

I do not write you today to support development of the OCS; our organization has remained neutral on OCS development and instead is focused on ensuring that outside voices do not speak for the Iñupiat people of the North Slope or appropriate our people, culture, or region to support any outside agenda. I am saddened that our fellow Alaskans do just that by signing this letter.

I find it ironic that these scientists call for consultation with the indigenous people of the North Slope, or the Iñupiat, yet these same scientists fail to consult with our people or even share the results of their studies which they conduct in our communities. This attitude is elitist. So often, people come out to our region to study our “iconic wildlife” and our “extraordinary eco-system” but fail to share their results with the local peoples and perpetuate ideals of how they think our region should be managed. We, the Iñupiat people, are intelligent, sophisticated, educated people who have the capacity to comprehend this extensive knowledge and make our own management decisions regarding our region. We refuse to be treated in such a degrading manner.

The people of the North Slope seek active participation in any dialogue that would affect the economic well-being of our communities, our subsistence resources and our esteemed Arctic environment. Local scientists and government officials should not perpetuate a system where our region, culture, and people are appropriated to

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fit into untrammelled landscape as a backdrop to their agenda – the Inupiat have been living, moving around and utilizing the Arctic lands and oceans for tens of thousands of years.

I would like to reach out to you to act as a conduit for open, meaningful dialogue with people of your administration to discuss what is important to our people and region. This is why VOAI was formed. I also ask that you speak to your administration and encourage officials to consult with the local people, leaders and entities like VOAI before engaging in any policy decisions regarding our region. We are willing to find more ways to work with your administration to ensure that you have the local voice and perspective when working on issue that affect the Iñupiat.

Taikuu,



Sayers Tuzroyluk, Sr.,
President

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Member Organizations

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Association
Arctic Slope Regional
Corporation
Atqasuk Corporation

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