



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: December 4, 2023

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**North Slope Iñupiat Leaders Take Advocacy to Capitol Hill,
Testify Before Key Congressional Subcommittee**

Leaders from Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS) and the Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation (KIC) testified before Congress in Support of HR 6285, the Bipartisan Alaska's Right to Produce Act

ANCHORAGE, AK – Building on recent advocacy efforts in response to the Department of the Interior's (DOI) unprecedented [September 6](#) actions affecting the North Slope Iñupiat's land and people, Nagruk Harcharek, President of [Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat \(VOICE\)](#), joined a delegation of elected North Slope Iñupiat leaders last week to meet with congressional policymakers in support of the bipartisan [HR 6285](#), or the "Alaska's Right to Produce Act." The visit included key testimony by representatives of the [Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope \(ICAS\)](#) and the Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation (KIC), both members of VOICE, before the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources to express their communities' support for HR 6285.

The bipartisan legislation, which was introduced by Representative Pete Stauber (R-MN) and Alaska's Representative Mary Sattler Peltola (D-AK), would reverse the DOI's sweeping September 6 announcements which restricts development on 13 million acres of land in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) and reinstate resource development leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). HR 6285 is an important tool to advance Alaska Native self-determination after the DOI issued its edicts – which will impose significant economic and cultural consequences on regional communities – without honoring its legal obligations to consult with the North Slope Iñupiat on policy proposals affecting their lands and people. Alaska's senators, Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan, have introduced HR 6285's companion bill in the Senate.

"The North Slope Iñupiat refuse to become conservation refugees on our own homelands and unapologetically stand behind the Alaska's Right to Produce Act," said **President of the Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation Charles Lampe**. "This bill will help realize the promise Congress made to the North Slope Iñupiat over 40 years ago. Kaktovik is the only community located within ANWR and has every right to pursue its economic, social, and cultural self-determination on its own land."

The Interior Department has continuously ignored the voices of the North Slope Iñupiat, who have stewarded the NPR-A and ANWR, their ancestral homelands, for thousands of years. It did not consult

with elected North Slope Iñupiat leadership during the formulation of its September 6 announcements and has not meaningfully engaged with the only communities located in the impacted areas, including Kaktovik, the only community located within the 19.6 million acres of ANWR.

“By denying the Iñupiat our rightful spot at the policymaking table, Secretary Haaland is violating her legal obligation to honor a government-to-government relationship with federally recognized tribes like ICAS on policies with substantial, direct effects on our land and people,” said **ICAS Director of Natural Resources Doreen Leavitt**. “The Alaska’s Right to Produce Act should not be necessary, but the tremendous, detrimental impacts to our communities, like Kaktovik, by DOI’s poorly crafted September 6 announcements require urgent resolution. We unapologetically support the bipartisan HR 6285 and are grateful to Representatives Peltola and Stauber for championing our cause.”

To date, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland has denied or ignored eight meeting requests from VOICE members, including the Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, the region’s federally recognized tribe, and other North Slope elected leadership. Her continued refusals defy White House and Interior [policy memorandums](#) about tribal consultation and raises serious questions about the Secretary’s engagement — or lack thereof — with other Indigenous groups when making decisions affecting their lands and people.

“The bipartisan Alaska’s Right to Produce Act gives the North Slope Iñupiat hope and shows that we have champions on both sides of the aisle who support our right to self-determination in our ancestral homelands,” said **Nagruk Harcharek**. “We support this bill without reservation and encourage its swift passage through Congress. In the meantime, we will continue to call on the federal government and Secretary Haaland to correct the political and legal injustices they are imposing on our people by welcoming the North Slope Iñupiat to the policymaking table starting now.”

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About Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat

Voice of Arctic Iñupiat (“VOICE”) is a nonprofit organization established in 2015 by the region’s collective elected Iñupiat leadership dedicated to preserving and advancing North Slope Iñupiat cultural and economic self-determination. Its members include local governments, Alaska Native Corporations, federally recognized tribes, and tribal non-profits across the North Slope of Alaska. In 2017, VOICE’s board passed a resolution in support of opening of the 1002 Area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil and gas exploration and development.