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ALASKA'S NORTH SLOPE IÑUPIAT REJECT NEW BILL RESTRICTING INDIGENOUS SELF-DETERMINATION

Washington, DC – Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOICE), which represents the majority of local governments, Alaska Native corporations, federally recognized tribes, and tribal non-profits serving communities across Alaska's North Slope region, opposes Representative Jared Huffman and Senator Ed Markey's legislation, which seeks to limit the North Slope Iñupiat's rights in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). This deeply flawed bill was crafted without any communication with the North Slope Iñupiat – who have stewarded the region as part of our Indigenous homelands for thousands of years – or the people of Kaktovik, the only community within ANWR's 19-million-acre expanse.

"It is deeply concerning that, once again, legislators in Washington are attempting to advance policy to interfere with Kaktovik's future, without any opportunity for our people to engage in the process," said **Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation President Charles Lampe**. "Kaktovik is the only community, and we are the only people, within ANWR's boundaries, and our ancestral homelands are on the Coastal Plain. This bill is a naked attempt by outside groups with no connection to our lands and people to undercut our cultural and economic freedom."

"This bill is yet another misguided attempt by outsiders to regulate our homelands without even bothering to listen to our voices," said **City of Kaktovik Mayor Nathan Gordon, Jr.** "It is deeply patronizing for individuals and organizations who have no connection to the Coastal Plain or Kaktovik to persist in their efforts to restrict our self-determination and threaten our community's future."

ANWR's Coastal Plain are ancestral Iñupiaq homelands and located entirely within the North Slope Borough, a home-rule government created to ensure our communities would have a say and benefit from economic development in the region. More than 95% of the Borough's tax revenues are derived from the taxation of development infrastructure – not output – and are used to provide essential public services, including modern water and sewer systems, schools, health clinics, and wildlife management to preserve subsistence resources. The proliferation of these basic services has delivered quantifiably positive outcomes for our people: In 1969, our average life expectancy was just 34 years; today, we can expect to live to an average age of 77. This increase is the [largest of its kind](#) over this period in the United States.

"Once again, the North Slope Iñupiat have been purposely denied a seat at the policymaking table by elected officials who claim to be acting in our interest while advancing an agenda that does not reflect our voices," said **Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat President Nagruk Harcharek**. "These individuals are beholden to so-called progressive organizations, the lot of whom only care about the Indigenous perspective when it is aligned with their policy priorities. As stated by the [2023 Arctic Peoples Conference](#), 'climate change cannot be an excuse to infringe on our distinct rights as Indigenous Peoples.' As such, we overwhelmingly reject Representative Huffman and Senator Markey's bill."

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About Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOICE)

VOICE is a nonprofit organization established in 2015 by the region's collective elected Iñupiat leadership and is 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.