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House Natural Resources Budget Reconciliation Language Takes Steps Toward Unleashing North Slope Iñupiat's Right to Self-Determination

Anchorage, AK – Members of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources released their budget reconciliation language, which will restore development rights in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) and advance lease sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), in line with the North Slope Iñupiat's wishes for self-determination on our ancestral homelands. The language again affirms the importance of Alaska's North Slope to our nation's energy policy goals, supports economic development in the region – crucial to sustaining our Indigenous culture – and advances Iñupiaq self-determination on our homelands.

"The language released by the House Committee on Natural Resources is another positive step toward unleashing our right to self-determination on our ancestral homelands," said **VOICE President Nagruk Harcharek**. "Over the past three months, efforts by Congress and the federal government have moved toward creating significant opportunities to strengthen our communities, economy, and culture. We look forward to continued engagement with the executive and congressional branches to maintain this momentum and create durable policies that benefit our region in the long-term."

VOICE's membership, which includes the elected leadership of Kaktovik, which is located on the Coastal Plain and is the only community with ANWR, and Atqasuk, which is located within the NPR-A, were [unified in opposition](#) to the previous administration's unilateral actions on our homelands without meaningful engagement and consultation.

"As the sole Indigenous community within ANWR, it is important the Kaktovikmiut's perspective be reflected in policies affecting our ancestral homelands, including the Refuge's Coastal Plain," said **Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation President Charles Lampe**. "The House Committee on Natural Resources' budget resolution language does just that by opening opportunities for economic development projects that are overwhelmingly supported by our community."

"Congress has finally heard our collective Iñupiaq voice and understood the vital importance of economic development projects to North Slope communities like Kaktovik," said **City of Kaktovik Mayor Nathan Gordon, Jr.** "Its actions give us renewed hope that important community services and infrastructure will not be held hostage by those unaffected in Washington, D.C. and that our community will flourish thanks in part to a revitalized local economy."

"The previous administration's unilateral actions in the NPR-A were deeply troubling and posed significant risks through restricted access to our community and culture," said **Native Village of Atqasuk President Mary Bordeaux**. "The language released today gives us hope by creating pathways for North Slope communities to steward our lands in accordance with our economic and cultural needs so that we may continue to live on our homelands for generations to come."

Over 95% of the North Slope's tax revenue is derived from taxation on resource development infrastructure. These funds support essential services, like schools, health clinics, modern water and sewer systems, and world-class wildlife management and research supporting Indigenous subsistence traditions. The proliferation of these services is directly connected to significant increases in average lifespan for the North Slope Iñupiat from just 34 years in 1969 to 77 years today – the [largest increase](#) of its kind in the United States over that period.

The House Committee on Natural Resources' budget reconciliation language mandates at least six lease sales within ANWR and resumes the leasing program within the NPR-A for energy production.

“Congress hears the North Slope Iñupiat and is taking steps to reflect our communities' wishes in the budget reconciliation,” **said Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope Tribal Secretary and Director of Natural Resources Doreen Leavitt.** “While the North Slope notes this milestone, we recognize that there is still much work to be done, and we encourage congressional and federal officials in Washington to continue engaging with our regional leadership early and often.”

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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.

In 2017, VOICE's board passed a resolution in support of opening the 1002 Area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil and gas exploration and development, and it filed a lawsuit last year against the deeply flawed National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A) 2024 rule. VOICE was the first organization to [file a lawsuit](#) to challenge the 2024 NPR-A rule, which was crafted without meaningful engagement with those who live on the North Slope, significantly hinders economic development in the region, and presents serious risks to survival of Indigenous communities and North Slope Iñupiaq culture.