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Contact: voiceofthearctic@marathonstrategies.com

VOICE Brings Advocacy Efforts to DC in Testimony to House Natural Resources Subcommittee

VOICE President Nagruk Harcharek Called for a Respectful Partnership Between the Federal Government and the North Slope Iñupiat in his Testimony

Washington, D.C. – Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (VOICE) President Nagruk Harcharek [testified](#) before the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations today, sharing the North Slope Iñupiat perspective on federal land management, energy policy, and the critical fight for Iñupiaq self-determination. This testimony was part of a robust week of advocacy in D.C., which also includes participation in a Congressional briefing about the complexities of the North Slope.

In his testimony, Harcharek traced the long history of federal decisions that denied Alaska Native land rights and emphasized that while resource development has funded critical improvements in health, education, and infrastructure, inconsistency in federal policy continues to threaten the economic stability of North Slope communities.

Harcharek noted that while the Biden administration re-approved the Willow Project, it also sidelined North Slope voices by moving forward with restrictive NPR-A and ANWR rulemaking without meaningful engagement and consultation. By contrast, the Trump administration's early actions — including an [executive order](#) on Alaska's resource development potential and a [historic visit](#) to Utqiagvik by three cabinet officials — signals a more direct willingness to engage meaningfully, respectfully, and lawfully with North Slope communities.

Harcharek emphasized that while these steps are encouraging, durable policy must be built on meaningful consultation and engagement that prioritizes Iñupiaq self-determination, regardless of who is in the White House. "Our partnership must be built on mutual respect," said Harcharek in his oral testimony. "We need policies informed by the voices of the North Slope Iñupiat."

Throughout the testimony, Harcharek repeatedly returned to how the North Slope Iñupiat's day-to-day lives are impacted by the decisions that DC lawmakers make. In response to a question from Alaska's Rep. Nick Begich on how jobs and infrastructure will impact the North Slope Iñupiat and what policymakers can do to help them, Harcharek detailed immediate needs facing the eight communities on the North Slope.

"Schools need to be built, water and sewer facilities need to be built — an \$80 million water and sewer system in the community of Point Lay needs to be built," said Harcharek. "It's not necessarily jobs in the fields, it's allowing people to stay in those communities and provide those services for those communities and be able to earn an income at home and then go out and subsist and further provide for their families."

This was the second time Harcharek testified in front of a House Natural Resources Subcommittee, having first testified on the impact the 2023 proposed NPR-A and ANWR rules would have on the North Slope Iñupiat in September 2023. While policy around NPR-A and ANWR has since shifted with the new

administration, VOICE's demand for respect for North Slope Iñupiaq self-determination has remained steadfast.

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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. VOICE was the first organization to file a lawsuit to challenge the 2024 National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska rule, which was crafted without meaningful engagement with those who live on the North Slope and presented serious risks to survival of Indigenous communities and North Slope Iñupiaq culture.