



**\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\***

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A statement from Nagruk Harcharek, President and CEO of the [Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat](#) (VOICE) on the [letter](#) from congressional lawmakers to the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) seeking to subvert North Slope Iñupiaq voices with regard to their Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) homelands. 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. In 2017, VOICE’s Board passed a resolution in support of opening the 1002 Area of ANWR to oil and gas exploration and development.

“It is disappointing to see so many lawmakers disregard of the collective will of the elected leadership of the North Slope Iñupiat. Our communities and their elected leaders — including Kaktovik, the only community located within ANWR — overwhelmingly support our right to self-determination in our ancestral homelands, including the option for responsible development in ANWR. Our voices must be respected in the policy conversations around ANWR.

“Alongside and in support of the elected leaders of Kaktovik, we have repeatedly travelled thousands of miles to D.C. to share this perspective with many lawmakers, including those who wrote to DOI in an attempt to subvert our self-determination. Rep. Huffman himself has [noted](#) the importance of resource development revenues to our local government and Indigenous regional and village corporations. It is disheartening that they continue to ignore our voices despite [multiple](#) testimonies before key House Natural Resources subcommittees by elected Iñupiaq leaders.

“We have stewarded our ANWR lands for millennia. It is important that lawmakers engage with our Iñupiaq leadership and respect our communities’ shared position on this issue.”

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