

amended, we are forwarding Transmittal No. 25-1R. This notification relates to enhancements or upgrades from the level of sensitivity of technology or capability described in the Section 36(b)(1) AECA certification 17-12 of June 23, 2017.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL F. MILLER,
Director.

Enclosure.

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Washington, DC.

Hon. BRIAN MAST,
*Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(5)(C) of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), as amended, we are forwarding Transmittal No. 25-1R. This notification relates to enhancements or upgrades from the level of sensitivity of technology or capability described in the Section 36(b)(1) AECA certification 17-12 of June 23, 2017.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL F. MILLER,
Director.

Enclosure.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 25-1R

Report of Enhancement or Upgrade of Sensitivity of Technology or Capability (Sec. 36(b)(5)(C), AECA)

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Government of Australia.

(ii) Sec. 36(b)(1), AECA Transmittal No.: 17-12.

Date: June 23, 2017.

Implementing Agency: Air Force.

(iii) Description: On June 23, 2017, Congress was notified by congressional certification transmittal number 17-12 of the possible sale, under Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, of up to five (5) Gulfstream G-550 aircraft modified to integrate Airborne Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Electronic Warfare (AISREW) mission systems, Global Positioning System (GPS) capability, secure communications, aircraft defensive systems; spares, including whole life costs of airborne and ground segments; aircraft modification and integration; ground systems for data processing and crew training; ground support equipment; publications and technical data; U.S. Government and contractor engineering, technical and logistics support services; flight test and certification; and other related elements of logistical and program support. The estimated total cost was \$1.3 billion. Major Defense Equipment (MDE) constituted \$.04 billion of this total.

On August 26, 2020, Congress was notified by Congressional certification transmittal number 20-0J of Australia's request for the inclusion of the following non-MDE items and services: spares and repair/return parts; consumables and support equipment; publications and technical documentation; maintenance, training and training equipment; U.S. Government and contractor flight test and certification, aircraft modification and integration, engineering, technical and logistics support services; and other related elements of logistical and program support. These additional items resulted in an increase in non-MDE cost of \$500 million, causing a revised total cost for non-MDE of \$1.76 billion. Major Defense Equipment (MDE) remained \$.04 billion. The total estimated case value increased by \$500 million to \$1.8 billion.

This transmittal notifies the addition of the following non-MDE items: follow-on sustainment support of the Royal Australian Air Force's Gulfstream G-550 aircraft modi-

fied with airborne intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and electronic warfare (AISREW) mission systems; and other related elements of logistics and program support. The estimated total cost of the new items is \$230 million. The estimated total case will increase by \$230 million to a revised \$2.03 billion. There is no MDE associated with this sale.

(iv) Significance: The proposed sale will support Australia's efforts to modernize its electronic warfare support capability and increase interoperability between the U.S. Air Force and the Royal Australian Air Force.

(v) Justification: This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States. Australia is one of the most important U.S. allies in the Western Pacific. The strategic location of this political and economic power contributes significantly to ensuring peace and economic stability in the region. It is vital to the U.S. national interest to assist our ally in developing and maintaining a strong and ready self-defense capability.

(vi) Date Report Delivered to Congress: November 7, 2025.

S.J. RES. 80

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to reject the Biden administration's sweeping plan to lock down nearly half of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska to responsible oil and gas development in contradiction to congressional mandates. I urge my colleagues to support the Alaska delegation's joint resolution of disapproval, S.J. Res. 80, to protect Alaska's rights and future.

The implementation of the Biden administration's National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, NPR-A, Integrated Activity Plan, IAP, Record of Decision, ROD, locks away more than 6 million acres previously made available for responsible oil and gas leasing and re-stricts infrastructure across 8 million acres—completely undermining the intent of Congress and ignoring the needs and input of local residents. Passing this joint resolution will disapprove this Record of Decision and revert management of the NPR-A back to the previously approved Integrated Activity Plan promulgated during the first Trump administration.

I have long said that Alaskans are some of the foremost conservationists in the world, with a long-standing record of balancing conservation with responsible resource and infrastructure development. Our oil fields on Alaska's North Slope offer a world-class example of what it means to responsibly produce energy in a harsh and demanding environment. The environmentally conscious way in which Alaskans have applied cutting-edge technology is second to none, utilizing ice roads and a winter construction season to minimize impact on Alaska's tundra.

Because of the opportunities provided by oil and gas operations, this industry has provided thousands of good-paying jobs to Alaskans. It has become the primary driver of my State's economy. Oil and gas revenues fund education, essential infrastructure, and community services across the State, making

responsible resource development truly a matter of life or death for Alaskans. In 1954, the Interior Department, with the help of the University of Pittsburgh, conducted a study of the health of Alaska Natives. Many of our communities in rural Alaska all had some of the lowest levels of life expectancy in the entire world. Between 1980 and 2014, the average lifespan increased by 13 years across the region, largely due to oil and gas revenue providing the opportunity to install what we consider to be basic and essential community infrastructure. To say these operations have had a positive impact on the local communities is a gross understatement.

The North Slope of Alaska contains some of the greatest hydrocarbon potential of any place on the planet. It is home to the Prudhoe Bay oil field, the largest conventional oil field in North America, which has produced over 13 billion barrels of oil since production began in 1977. On either side of Prudhoe Bay are two Federal areas, one being the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the other being the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, the subject of today's legislation. The U.S. Geological Survey this year reported that half of the estimated undiscovered technically recoverable oil lying below Federal lands was in Alaska, 14 billion barrels of it being on the North Slope of Alaska. Importantly, the North Slope of Alaska is also the ancestral lands of the Inupiat people, who have lived, subsisted, and called the Arctic home for thousands of years. This is an area the size of Minnesota, wholly above the Arctic Circle, with none of the communities connected by a permanent road system, necessitating all supplies needing to be flown or barged in. Like much of rural Alaska, it has some of the highest costs of living anywhere in the Nation.

The discovery of Prudhoe Bay in 1968 could not have come at a more crucial time for the United States, which was right at the height of the Arab Oil Embargo. The barrels of crude oil from Prudhoe and subsequent North Slope discoveries have helped ensure the American people are not held hostage by adversarial powers seeking to use energy as a tool of coercion. The discovery of Prudhoe Bay did not come in a vacuum. In fact, it was long known that the North Slope of Alaska had oil potential. In the early 1900s, as the U.S. Navy began transitioning from coal to oil-burning engines, the Federal Government became increasingly concerned about the supply of oil reserves in the event of war or national emergency. In response, the Federal Government made multiple withdrawals of public land to ensure a stockpile of fuel supplies for the Navy remained available. The largest of these reserves was on the Alaska North Slope and was designated by President Warren G. Harding in 1923 as the Naval Petroleum Reserve Numbered 4, Alaska.

Following the discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay and the ongoing oil embargo, Congress passed the 1976 Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act, NPRPA, transferring jurisdiction of the Reserve from the Navy to the Department of the Interior and redesignating the area as the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, a 23-million-acre area roughly the size of Indiana. A 1980 amendment to the NPRPA directed the Secretary of the Interior to undertake “an expeditious program of competitive leasing of oil and gas” in the NPR-A and also set up revenue sharing provision between the Federal Government and the State of Alaska that prioritized the subdivisions of the State most directly severely impacted by oil and gas development, ensuring the people who live in Alaska could provide for essential services.

While initial interest in the NPR-A was tepid, new oil finds closer to the NPR-A boundaries led to a number of successful lease sales generating millions of dollars in Federal revenues. Among the most successful was the 2016 lease sale, which came following the discovery of the Willow field. The Bureau of Land Management, BLM, estimates the Willow Project will produce 576 million barrels of oil and non-gas liquids over 30 years and generate \$5.9 billion in revenue for the Federal Government through 2053.

In 2012, the Obama administration, issued the first integrated activity plan, IAP, addressing management for the entire NPR-A, but only made available 11.8 million acres of the Reserve for oil and gas leasing. Beginning in 2017, during the first Trump administration, the Department of the Interior took steps to revise the IAP and Environmental Impact Statement, EIS, that would strike an appropriate balance of promoting development while protecting surface resources as was required in the NPRPA. In December 2020, BLM released the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska Integrated Activity Plan Record of Decision, the culmination of thousands of comments, over a dozen public meetings, and the continuous involvement of the North Slope Borough, the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, the State of Alaska, and relevant Federal Agencies. The RECORD of Decision selected an alternative that made available an additional 6.8 million acres, for a total of 18.6 million acres or 82 percent of the NPR-A’s subsurface estate, available for oil and gas leasing while ensuring lands were made available for pipelines and other essential oil and gas infrastructure and community infrastructure. The 2020 plan also provided important protections for surface resources, particularly subsistence uses by providing adequate protection for sensitive bird populations and the Teshekpuk and Western Arctic Caribou Herds. All in all, it was a phenomenal achievement by some very dedicated BLM employees and an example of Federal Agencies working hand-in-hand

with Alaskans to understand our unique conditions, producing results that protect both our environment and our way of life.

However, following the 2020 election, President Biden announced plans to immediately review all Agency actions taken during President Trump’s term, and the Department of the Interior identified the 2020 IAP/EIS as warranting review, one of the 70 Executive actions the Biden administration took targeting Alaska. BLM determined that the existing 2020 IAP/EIS and associated evaluations were adequate, and no additional analysis was necessary for the Department to select a different alternative from the range analyzed. In April 2022, BLM released a new record of decision that selected the No Action Alternative identified in the 2020 IAP that effectively reverted management of the NPR-A back to the Obama administration’s 2013 IAP ROD. The Biden IAP greatly expanded special areas within the Reserve, prohibiting leasing on 11 million acres or 48 percent of the Reserve, and prohibited infrastructure on approximately 8.3 million acres. The ROD altered and expanded the Special Areas designated under the NPRPA and established performance-based required operating procedures and lease stipulations that applied to oil and gas leasing and development and to some non-oil and gas activities within the Reserve. It is this sweeping plan by the Biden administration that the passage of this joint resolution would invalidate.

I have long said that when we shut down production in Alaska, we weaken America’s hand on the global stage. Every time the Federal Government curtails the production of oil and gas in Alaska, it strengthens the position of OPEC and our adversaries while undermining America’s geostrategic leverage, the very outcome Congress sought to prevent by opening up the NPR-A in the first place.

The issuance of Biden’s new highly restrictive IAP was widely condemned as egregious by Alaskans. Our entire Alaska congressional delegation slammed the decision as contrary to good science, in contravention of congressional directives in Federal law, and foolish, as the Biden administration implored OPEC+ members to produce more oil. Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy said the plan “is another sign of the federal government turning its back on Alaska and hampering domestic energy production.” The Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, ASRC, one of the 12 land-owning Alaska Native corporations created under the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, ANCSA, and representing the interests of more than 13,000 Inupiat shareholders, echoed those concerns. In testimony before the Alaska Legislature, ASRC Vice President of External Affairs Bridget Anderson explained, “despite our sustained efforts and our willingness to work with the federal government, our perspectives

are often drowned out by entities who have no ties to our region nor have any understanding of the nuances of the ANCSA model of indigenous representation. The choice by members of Congress and the administration to overlook our voices is not only frustrating, it is insulting.” The Alaska Legislature passed a resolution unopposed, sponsored by the legislator representing the North Slope, an Inupiat himself, urging BLM to maximize the area available for oil and gas leasing and development in the NPR-A and to take into account the long history of safe and responsible oil and gas development on the North Slope. All these Alaskan voices were ignored.

Importantly, my joint resolution is supported by the North Slope Regional Trilateral, which is made up of the elected leaders of the North Slope Borough, the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, which is the regional tribe, and ASRC. The members of the North Slope Regional Trilateral voiced their opposition to the Biden administration’s overbearing restrictions during his 4 years in office. Yet, despite their opposition, they were ignored—a repeated offense of the Biden administration, who repeatedly disregarded Alaska Native voices. In fact, North Slope leaders from my State flew thousands of miles eight separate times to DC to request a meeting with Secretary of the Interior Haaland to oppose her lock-up of the North Slope. Eight times, she refused to meet with them. The Trilateral’s letter of support for the disapproval resolution notes that the 2022 IAP put in place by the Biden administration imposes “sweeping restrictions that curtail responsible development, undermine congressional intent, and disregard the well-being of the people who depend on these lands for both subsistence and livelihoods” and “disregards the economic needs of North Slope communities, and creates unnecessary obstacles to infrastructure, energy, and community health across the North Slope of Alaska.”

Fortunately, elections have consequences, and on his first day in office of his second term, President Trump signed Executive Order 14153, “Unleashing Alaska’s Extraordinary Resource Potential,” which called for the rescission of the 2022 Integrated Activity Plan Record of Decision and a reimplementation of the IAP issued by the first Trump administration in 2020. This past summer, Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum flew to Alaska and held a townhall on the North Slope with regional leaders and listened to their concerns, showing respect for the Alaska Native people who live there. Under his leadership, he has already advanced steps to rescind Biden’s other disastrous restriction on the NPR-A: the 2024 Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska final rule.

In March of this year, Alaska’s congressional delegation requested that

the Government Accountability Office, GAO, determine whether the 2022 NPR-A IAP ROD constituted a “rule” under the Congressional Review Act, CRA. GAO issued its legal opinion in July, concluding that the 2022 NPR-A IAP ROD is a rule under the Administrative Procedures Act and subject to the CRA and congressional disapproval, the action we are taking with S.J. Res. 80.

Further, this Congress has already taken decisive steps to unlock the NPR-A. In the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” P.L. 119–21, Congress mandated lease sales to be offered under the same terms and conditions set forth in the 2020 IAP. Passage of S.J. Res. 80 would durably protect against another rogue administration promulgating a substantially similar anti-development management plan for the NPR-A as contained in the 2022 IAP ROD.

In addition to the Trilateral, this resolution of disapproval is supported by the Alaska Support Industry Alliance, the Alaska Oil and Gas Association, the Resource Development Council for Alaska, Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions, the American Exploration and Production Council, the National Federation of Independent Business, the American Petroleum Institute, Americans for Prosperity, the Alaska Chamber, as well as by the Trump administration.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a letter from the Resource Development Council for Alaska, dated October 30, 2025, expressing strong support for S.J. Res. 80 and H.J. Res. 124.

I urge my colleagues to reject unlawful regulatory overreach, reinforce American energy dominance, uphold Federal law, and listen to Alaska Native voices by supporting the Alaska congressional delegation and voting for this joint resolution of disapproval and rescinding this Record of Decision.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL,
Anchorage, Alaska, October 30, 2025.

Re Support for S.J. Res. 80/H.J. Res. 124.

Hon. Senator LISA MURKOWSKI,
Washington, DC.

Hon. Congressman NICK BEGICH,
Washington, DC.

Hon. Senator DAN SULLIVAN,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR MURKOWSKI, SENATOR SULLIVAN, AND CONGRESSMAN BEGICH: The Resource Development Council for Alaska (RDC) writes in support of S.J. Res. 80 and H.J. Res. 124 to disapprove the BLM’s 2022 NPR-A Integrated Activity Plan Record of Decision. RDC strongly supports these joint resolutions and urges Congress’s and the President’s swift action to reject this misguided and harmful planning decision.

RDC is a statewide, non-profit trade association founded in 1975. Our membership is comprised of individuals and companies from Alaska’s fishing, tourism, forestry, mining, and oil and gas industries and includes Alaska Native corporations, local communities, organized labor, and industry support firms. RDC’s purpose is to encourage a strong, diversified private sector in Alaska and expand the state’s economic base through the re-

sponsible development of our natural resources.

The 23 million acres contained in the NPR-A were set aside by the federal government in 1923, and directed by Congress in the Naval Petroleum Reserves Act of 1976, specifically for natural resource development, balanced with conservation, to promote America’s national security through energy resources, and it is an asset to the State of Alaska. Responsible development in the NPR-A supports our nation’s energy security, well-paying jobs and economic benefits for local Alaska Native communities and the state as a whole. The 2022 BLM ROD improperly limits future oil and gas lease sales and development to occur by creating a presumption against future permitting. This is a bad policy that does not support Alaska Native communities, organized labor, or our energy independence.

Given the outstanding track record of the oil and gas industry in the Alaska Arctic, as well as the technological advances of the past 40 years, RDC supports an IAP for NPR-A that reopens all of NPR-A’s subsurface historically available to oil and gas leasing with reasonable and economically feasible stipulations that do not discourage the development and transport of energy resources.

The 2022 BLM IAP ROD unnecessarily prohibits leasing and development of potentially oil-rich lands in much of the NPR-A. This is a clear example of agency overreach and will only discourage responsible resource development and America’s energy independence. As RDC has emphasized numerous times before, the NPR-A is a petroleum reserve with a proven record where surface resources and subsistence can be protected without unduly restricting highly prospective areas to leasing.

Decades of oil and gas activity on the North Slope clearly demonstrate industry can operate in the Arctic while maintaining the highest standards of safety and environmental sensitivity. New advances in technology have greatly reduced the footprint of development, allowing for greater consolidation of facilities and the preservation of more acreage within development zones for wildlife habitat. For example, as much as 60-plus square miles can now be developed from a single 12 to 14 acre gravel drill site. New drilling capabilities are being developed that may increase the subsurface development possible from the same size drill site to as much as 150-plus square miles. The net effect is an ever-decreasing impact on surface resources.

The discovery and development of new oil and gas deposits will benefit Alaska and local communities. State and local revenues derived from production will help sustain important services. New industry activity will also provide thousands of job opportunities, boost the local, state, and national economy, and help refill the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS). Development of new energy deposits will also reduce reliance on imported oil and help maintain American energy dominance.

Given the NPR-A was specifically designated by Congress to produce critical energy resources, it is important the BLM continues to provide access to prospects with the highest potential. That is why this SJR 80 and HJR 124 are so critical to reverse the overreach of BLM’s 2022 NPR-A IAP record of decision.

RDC is concerned with the alarming trend from the last administration of “locking up” oil-rich lands in NPR-A and providing for less leasing and less access. Much of the most prospective acreage could be removed from leasing under the 2022 ROD, including those closest to potential future production. To much protest and lack of adequate con-

sultation, the BLM’s 2022 IAP record of decision for the NPR-A did just this—locking up highly prospective areas and layering surface protections prohibitive to leasing or development.

On a related note, attached to this letter of support is a copy of RDC’s comments to the 2023 BLM Proposed Rule for the Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, 43 CFR Part 2360, RIN 1004-AE95, dated December 7, 2023. While this rule is currently under consideration for rescission pursuant to Executive Order 14153 and Department of Interior Secretarial Order 3422, related to “Unleashing Alaska’s Extraordinary Resource Potential,” (which RDC fully supports) we hope these comments help you and your staff with historical context for building support for these CRA’s to disapprove the BLM’s 2022 NPR-A IAP record of decision.

CONCLUSION

RDC appreciates your leadership introducing S.J. Res. 80 and H.J. Res. 124 and moving forward with disapproval of the BLM’s 2022 NPR-A IPA Record of Decision. The 2022 ROD went too far and does not properly follow the intent and purpose for the NPR-A and mandated by Congress.

A CRA disapproving the 2022 ROD for the NPR-A IAP will ensure federal lands in Alaska are open for business and help demonstrate energy dominance for the United States. The ability to develop new energy deposits in NPR-A will benefit Alaska, local communities, and the nation. Revenues derived from new production will also help sustain important state services. Industry activity will provide new job opportunities for local residents and others while boosting the economy. Increased access to NPR-A can be accommodated without sacrificing the traditional ways of life, especially the subsistence needs of Alaska residents in the Arctic. Ensuring the NPR-A is open for future lease sales will maintain America’s energy dominance and reduce foreign imports.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue of vital importance to Alaska’s economic future.

Sincerely,

LEILA KIMBRELL,
Executive Director.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL,
Anchorage, Alaska, December 7, 2023.

Re BLM Proposed Rule for the Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, 43 CFR Part 2360, RIN 1004-AE95.

Department of Interior,
Director, Bureau of Land Management,
Washington, DC.

DEAR DIRECTOR: The Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc. (RDC) submits the following comments to the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) proposed rule for the “Management and Protection of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska (NPR-A)” originally published on September 8, 2023 (FR 62025). This proposed rule reflects a sea change to management of the NPR-A as it was originally intended. The rule is unnecessary, overly burdensome, fails to comply with current law. For the reasons that follow, at a minimum, this proposed rule should not be adopted.

Who We Are: The RDC is a statewide, not for profit, trade association comprised of individuals and companies from Alaska’s fishing, tourism, forestry, mining, and oil and gas industries. RDC’s membership includes all the land-owning Alaska Native regional corporations as well as village corporations, local communities, including the North Slope Borough, organized labor, and industry support firms. RDC’s purpose is to encourage

a strong, diversified private sector in Alaska and expand the state's economic base through the responsible development of our natural resources. The industries RDC represents are historically significant economic drivers for Alaska's economy. Combined, these industries employ or support employment for the majority of the more than 730,000 Alaskans who call Alaska home. For more than 48 years, RDC has proud history of balancing the need for a diverse economy with the need for the responsible development of our natural resources. The proposed rule threatens to reverse that.

Comment Period Should Have Been Extended: The comment period should be extended to allow for full participation of all Alaskans, in particular, the communities of the North Slope who are most impacted by this proposed rule. This proposed rule was published on September 8, 2023, with an original public comment period deadline of November 7, that has since been extended twice to the current deadline of December 7, 2023.

Notwithstanding these extensions, more time is needed to assess and analyze the substantive and technical changes proposed by this rule. The agency should not be rushing this process that has the effect of creating a presumption against oil and gas development in the NPR-A. RDC is not suggesting environmental standards and protections should be reduced for the Special Areas designated within the NPR-A. However, this is a major change to the long established management program for the NPR-A that needs sufficient time to assess impacts.

Further, it appears that the agency is trying to rush this process through for its own political purposes, which is an improper reason for fast-tracking such a major proposed rule. It has been reported that a representative of the agency stated during a public meeting that an extension of time was not possible because the agency had to consider timing under the Congressional Review Act (CRA). Using the CRA timeline to avoid a possible reversal in the next congress is a political maneuver that does not justify short circuiting the public process.

Failed Consultation: The proposed rule spends considerable time pointing to the importance of subsistence and the needs for Alaska's Native peoples and the North Slope communities who rely on subsistence hunting and fishing to justify this proposed rule. RDC does not dispute that subsistence is an important and critical practice for all Alaskans, including Alaska Native peoples and their communities. However, despite this focus, the BLM ignores the needs of our Alaska Native peoples during this rule-making process. BLM published this proposed rule during a critical subsistence period for the communities on Alaska's North Slope: the fall whaling season. RDC has been told that little to no consultation has occurred between the Alaska Native entities of the North Slope, the North Slope Borough, and other key stakeholders. What little consultation or public meeting process did occur was hastily convened with little to no opportunity for local communities to receive timely notice.

Although the proposed rule claims to comply with E.O. 13175, requiring consultation and coordination with Indian Tribal Governments, including Alaska Native Tribes and ANCSA Alaska Native Corporations, the record does not support that. Sending one letter informing these stakeholders of a rule-making effort followed by a lack of adequate consultation and doing so during an important subsistence harvest period without granting numerous extensions of time requests from these same stakeholders fails to comply with the law and department policy.

The BLM Management should not fail in its responsibility to consult with Alaska's federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Native corporation. Meaningful consultation is required by E.O. 13175 (November 6, 2000), POTUS Memo on Tribal Consultation and Nation-to-Nation Building (January 26, 2021) and DOI 512 DM 4 (2015), and DOI 512 DM 5.

The Proposed Rule Exceeds BLM Authority: This proposal creates a new, burdensome, and time-consuming administrative process for reviewing oil and gas related development activities that are contrary to the needs and purposes of the NPR-A. The proposed rule takes the instruction of maximizing protection of Special Areas under the federal NPR-A Act (NPRAA) to an extreme that is not warranted and fails to balance the need for oil and gas development to occur for the nation's energy security and independence. BLM potentially exceeds its authority by incorporating the Integrated Activity Plan of 2022 (IAP) into the NPR-A regulations when the NPR-A is specifically exempt from the Federal Land Management Planning Act (FLPMA) planning requirement. BLM acknowledges this in the proposed rule but goes onto to say that it "nonetheless" intends to do so. In another example, BLM proposes to change the authority of officers making oil and gas related decisions from what currently must be exercised consistent with current law and after consultation with federal, state, local agencies and Native organizations to now "regardless of any existing authority." Agencies cannot simply grant themselves the power to make decisions "regardless of any existing authority;" that is simply not how our democratic process works. If anything, this proposed change is less than clear and needs additional time for review.

Presumption Against Oil & Gas Development Violates the NPRAA: The proposed rule specifically explains, under section 2361.10, that BLM will now have the authority to delay or deny, without setting a timetable, on any activities it determines will have significant adverse effects on surface resources. This is overly broad and restrictive. Further, the proposed rule states it will "presume . . . that that oil and gas leasing or infrastructure on lands allocated as available for such activities 'should NOT be permitted' . . ." (Emphasis added.) This directly contravenes the purpose and intent for which the NPR-A was established. The NPRAA directed DOI to be administered for domestic energy production through an oil and gas leasing program. BLM cannot create a presumption by rulemaking that it will not permit activity directed by Congress.

Further, the rule states it will not impact any current leasing approvals or permitted activity. This is not true. The proposed rule threatens harm to existing lease contracts given its clear conflict with NPR-A's original purposes when created in 1923 and as directed by Congress through the NPRAA.

Flawed Economic Assessment: The proposed rule summarily concludes it will not have a significant economic effect on a substantial number of small entities under the Regulatory Flexibility Act and only affects businesses in the oil and gas industry operating in the NPR-A. This is simply wrong.

The DOI's analysis in support of the proposed rule did not account for the significant economic benefits delivered to local Alaska communities (including Alaska Native organizations) from NPR-A development. Federal law mandates that 50% of lease revenue from NPR-A projects go towards a unique grant program that prioritizes improvement projects that will deliver social and environmental justice benefits to impacted communities, many of which are Alaska Native communities. The economic analysis fails to

consider the impact of local communities losing these benefits. The economic analysis also wholly fails to consider the social implications of eliminating or dramatically restricting future development in the NPR-A that would remove jobs and a substantial portion of the tax base. Responsible development on the NPR-A creates enormous economic benefits. The economic analysis the DOI used ignores benefits like the NPR-A Impact Mitigation Grant program. This grant program creates a legal requirement for local communities to receive generous revenues from projects. If project development is slowed or halted by the new rule, Alaska Native communities will lose enormous revenues for public services, health facilities and educational resources—to name a few impacted areas.

Further, the proposed rule will stifle any future development in currently approved areas of the NPR-A as companies will be wary to invest into developments in areas where the government can seemingly outlaw further development without cause. This chilling effect will have a dramatic economic impact.

Alaska's North Slope (ANS) energy production and infrastructure has had significant economic impact and contribution to Alaska's economy and our nation's energy security. In 2022, ANS produced an average of 482,000 bpd. Since the Trans Alaska Pipeline Systems (TAPS) was created, ANS has produced over 18.5 billion barrels of oil. In 2022, this support 69,250 jobs in Alaska, or 16% of employment in Alaska and accounting for \$5.9 billion in wages, or 17% of wages in Alaska. Alaska's oil and gas industry contributed \$4.5 billion in revenue to state and local governments, comprising 47% of state revenue in 2022. Over time, since statehood in 1959, the oil and gas industry has produced \$274 billion in petroleum revenues to the State. This is a significant economic impact that is threatened by this proposed rule if implemented.

Failed Unfunded Mandates Reform Act Assessment: Similarly, the proposed rule concludes without explanation that it would not have a significant or unique effect on State, local, or Tribal governments. This is also simply false. Diminished oil production from the NPR-A would result in diminished production tax and ad valorem tax revenue for the State and local governments in Alaska. This means less revenue for the State of Alaska to provide services to all Alaskans. The BLM's reasoning in this regard also likely violates its conclusion that this does not have federalism implications under E.O. 13132.

The Proposed Rule is a Direct Threat to America's Energy Security: The proposed rule concludes it will not adversely affect our national energy security in contravention of E.O. 13211. In almost the same breath, the agency states the proposed rule will "presume . . . that that oil and gas leasing or infrastructure on lands allocated as available for such activities 'should NOT be permitted' . . ." (Emphasis added.) There is no way to explain the logic of this assessment. A presumption against approving oil and gas leasing absolutely equates to less development of oil and gas energy resources.

Analysis from the U.S. Geological Survey estimates there are 8.7 billion barrels of undiscovered oil in the NPR-A, an area set aside by the Federal government specifically for petroleum development. By denying or dramatically restricting development in the region, the Administration is denying Alaskans—and all Americans—reliable, affordable energy, as well as billions of dollars in revenues. We cannot afford to further limit U.S. production which will only increase our reliance on foreign nations, including adversarial nations, amid rising geopolitical

threats. At a time when oil prices are rising and global supply can be easily constricted by foreign governments, investing in domestic oil production is a matter of national and energy security. During a time of high inflation across the country, this misguided rule will almost certainly lead to higher energy prices for working class families across America. Restricting access to energy development limits consumers' access to affordable, reliable energy.

Furthermore, oil production on the North Slope and in the NPR-A contributes to the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS), a vital piece of U.S. infrastructure. Oil produced in the NPR-A will keep TAPS economically viable and capable of providing oil to the rest of the United States and beyond. Restricting future development of the NPR-A by creating a presumption against permitting the uses for which the NPR-A was specifically developed directly threatens our energy security.

Conclusion: As indicated above, this process is being fast-tracked, lacks transparency, possibly exceeds the agency's legal authority, and lacks proper consultation as required by department policy. At the very least, the complexity of the new proposal warrants additional time for public review and scrutiny and, importantly, meaningful consultation with the Alaska Native tribal entities, corporations, and communities most impacted by these decisions.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

LEILA KIMBRELL,
Executive Director.

TRIBUTE TO LAURENCE "LARRY" BENZ

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to an accomplished and compassionate Kentucky business leader Dr. Laurence "Larry" Benz, the founder of Confluent Health. I have had the opportunity to work alongside Larry, and we have developed a strong friendship. Through military service, professional sports, and now a thriving business career, he has accumulated a wide range of experiences to help grow Kentucky's economy. He will soon be inducted into the Kentucky Entrepreneur Hall of Fame for his transformational leadership abilities and impact on Kentuckians' lives.

Prior to his start in the entrepreneurial space, Dr. Benz served in the U.S. Army as a captain in the Army Medical Specialist Corps. For his devoted service in the military, he received the Meritorious Service Medal. I am thankful for his bravery and unwavering commitment to our country. While still serving, Dr. Benz founded the Kentucky Orthopedic Rehab Team, a private practice outpatient physical therapy company. Through this work, he effectively pursued his passion for providing Kentuckians with excellent physical therapy access and care. The company went on to become the largest private practice in Kentucky and southern Indiana, eventually expanding into North Carolina and Florida.

After selling that business, Dr. Benz went on to cofound with his wife Dr. Patricia Benz, a well-respected physical therapist Confluent Health. The

company helps support businesses that offer rehabilitation services like physical therapy, occupational therapy, chronic pain management, and sports medicine. Confluent Health assists in all the "behind-the-scenes" work that goes into keeping these rehabilitation spaces open. Additionally, they help practitioners get access to specialty board certifications and post-professional programs so that they can focus on providing care instead of worrying about the business side of their practices. In 2022, I was glad to join Dr. Benz for the opening of Confluent Health's new headquarters in Louisville, marking a historic investment in our city while delivering first-rate care to Kentuckians. Dr. Benz then took everything he learned in his time as CEO of Confluent Health and stepped into a new role helping grow the Dental Care Alliance. They serve approximately 400 dental private practices across 24 States.

Dr. Benz's excellence in business is paired with a drive to help others and give back to communities. Outside of his professional work, he has shown a commitment to education in Kentucky. In 2011, Dr. Benz was appointed to serve on the board of trustees my alma mater, the University of Louisville, and went on to be elected board chairman last year. Currently, he serves as a member of the UofL Athletic Association and the president's council. He is a proven leader whose expertise is invaluable in both the healthcare and academic spaces. He has been invited to present at over 250 physical therapy programs, national conferences, and MBA programs throughout the country. His vision for future generations of physical therapy providers is founded in the values of empathy and compassion. There is no doubt that Larry has made his mark on the industry and continues to leave a lasting impact each and every day.

Larry's career is one focused on kindness and support. He has emphasized patients' well-being and mental health, along with their physical health. On the provider's side, he has lifted small private practices well beyond what they would have been able to do on their own, in a variety of fields of medicine. He has reached nearly every region of Kentucky over the course of his career, and I admire his and Patty's continued commitment to the Louisville area. I also admire their commitment to their family, with children Aaron, Lauren, Jonathan, and their grandchildren Levi, Johnny, Elliot, and Valora.

Again, I ask my colleagues to please join me in congratulating Dr. Larry Benz on his induction into the Kentucky Entrepreneur Hall of Fame and recognizing his profound impact on Kentucky.

TRIBUTE TO CHARLES SIMPSON

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to my good,

longtime friend, U.S. District Court Judge for the Western District of Kentucky Charles R. Simpson III, in special celebration of the upcoming ceremony at the Gene Snyder U.S. Courthouse for the unveiling of his official portrait.

Chuck and I have been friends for a while. In fact, our friendship goes all the way back to our internship with Henry Clay.

Jokes aside, I am proud to have known Chuck for so long. We both attended the University of Louisville, but we didn't get to know each other until I came back to Kentucky to begin my law career. We practiced law together for a brief period. I was terrible and hated it. I wouldn't go to myself for a simple will. Chuck was great and loved it. And thankfully for me, Chuck also loved politics, so I got his help in running for Jefferson County judge-executive. We worked hard together on that first campaign. And amazingly, we won by 11,000 votes—a sizeable victory for a Republican in a blue city—and I was lucky to keep Chuck on my team as legal counsel.

Chuck was also there when I first ran for Senate. I headed back to DC, and Chuck stayed in Louisville to build on his law career, but we remained in touch. Only a couple years into my first term, I had the opportunity to recommend a candidate for appointment to the Federal bench. Knowing Chuck's character and legal chops, I didn't have to look any further. President Reagan made the wise choice of nominating Chuck in 1986 to the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Kentucky. He served as chief judge for several years, beginning in 1994. Under his supervision as chief judge, the court underwent impressive transformations to improve its handling of administrative matters.

I don't mean to brag in observing that Chuck's appointment turned out to be a great move. He has been an excellent judge who is respected throughout the legal community. He understands complex legal issues very quickly and always hears out both sides in court before making decisions. Judge Simpson's fairness and hard work earned him renown throughout Kentucky. He won the Louisville Bar's Judge of the Year in 2000 and the Kentucky Bar's Outstanding Judge of the Year in 2005.

Chuck's work is inspired not only by his hometown of Louisville, but also by his academic and professional journeys abroad. He brings with him a special set of skills, knowing how to connect with others internationally. He created a special sister court relationship between his court and one in Croatia, and Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court William Rehnquist even appointed him to an international judicial council.

Of course, I would be remiss not to mention the time Judge Simpson made international news on a visit to Russia when he accidentally locked himself in