

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

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(INSTALLATIONS, ENERGY, AND ENVIRONMENT)**

BEFORE THE

**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION**

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES**

Thank you, Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and other distinguished Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide comments on H. R. 414, a bill regarding usage of certain Federal land within the boundaries of Fort Wainwright Military Reservation in Fairbanks, Alaska.

The 76-acre parcel of land (commonly called the “Birchwood Housing Area”), which is the subject of H. R. 414, is currently leased to a private party, North Star Alaska Housing Corporation (“North Star”). The land lease term expires in 2018. At the end of the lease term the lessee is contractually obligated by the terms of the lease to remove all buildings, structures, fixtures and other improvements constructed or placed on the leased property by the lessee. The Army has plans for future use of the property for military purposes. The Birchwood Housing Area is the largest parcel of land available for future development within the existing cantonment area.

The Army does not plan to extend the lease or divest the property. The Army expects North Star to fulfill all of its contractual obligations under the lease, including the requirement to restore the site upon lease expiration. For these reasons, the Army does not support enactment of H. R. 414.

The Army was approached and asked to consider exchanging this parcel for other property. This parcel is important to the Army for future development and use for military purposes. The Army is not seeking an exchange, but would consider a proposal that provides equivalent military value to the Army. To merit consideration, a site would need to provide buildable land contiguous to the Fort Wainwright cantonment area. The Army recognizes that the parcel is public domain land that has been withdrawn for military purposes. If no longer needed for military purposes, the land would normally be returned to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), so any discussion of potential exchange options must include the BLM.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our views on H. R. 414.