

STATEMENT OF REP. EDWARD J. MARKEY (D-MA)  
AT THE HEARING OF  
H. R. 39, ARCTIC COASTAL PLAIN DOMESTIC ENERGY SECURITY ACT  
March 12, 2003

“In our lifetimes, we have few opportunities to shape the very earth on which our descendants will live their lives.”

So said Mo Udall, 23 years ago as the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act neared passage. I ask my colleagues and the distinguished witnesses to consider his closing sentences as we proceed here today.

“... We will shape this last great expanse of wild land, and the marks we choose to make or not make across these parts of Alaska will linger on the land far beyond our lifetimes. We will write, in these votes, our signatures across the very face of the living earth.”

We are here to discuss H. R. 39, the Arctic Coastal Plain Domestic Energy Security Act of 2003. This bill would overturn the 23 year Congressional precedent of protecting the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil development. Before we take that drastic step, I believe this committee deserves to debate the full range of policy options for this precious part of America.

Unfortunately, we are not having that debate today. I have requested a hearing on H. R. 770, the Morris K. Udall Arctic Wilderness Act of 2003, which would designate the coastal plain as wilderness and permanently protect it from development. Permanent protection is an equally valid policy option for this Committee to consider. But the closest we will come to a full debate today is holding this hearing in the Morris K. Udall Room.

The panels are also missing an important voice, that of the Gwich'in People, whose culture and lives are intimately tied to the Porcupine Caribou herd that rely on the Arctic Refuge's coastal plain for calving. Lucy Beach, a member of the Gwich'in Steering Committee, joins us in the audience today, and I would ask unanimous consent that a statement from the Gwich'in Steering committee be included in the record. To quote from their statement, “As Gwich'in this is a human rights issue. We have relied on the caribou for thousands of years and the caribou continues to be a critical element of our culture.”

Proponents of this bill have told you why they think we should open the Refuge for development. Let me tell you why I think the Arctic Refuge should remain WILD.

- **Wilderness is unparalleled.** Nowhere on Earth is the diversity of Arctic habitat and wildlife represented as it is in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. According to the Fish and Wildlife Service, “This relative compactness of habitats provides for a greater degree of ecological diversity than any other similar sized area of Alaska's North Slope.”
- **Industry isn't interested in drilling there.** According to media reports, British Petroleum, the major North Slope player, is looking elsewhere in the world for the next big field and is even considering shutting down their Badami field, the field closest to the Arctic Refuge.
- **Looking in the Refuge is the wrong place to find energy security.** Developing the Arctic Refuge will not make us independent of foreign sources of oil. To become energy independent, we should tap American ingenuity to make more efficient buildings and vehicles and design new renewable technologies that our domestic resources can fuel cleanly. And we don't need Arctic Refuge oil to replace Iraqi oil. From 1991 to 1995, oil imports from Iraq were banned; oil prices and supplies barely hiccuped, and the period coincided with one of the greatest economic expansions in US history.
- **Damaging refuge precedent is set by allowing oil and gas development in the Arctic Refuge.** This would overturn a 35-year history of refuge protection dating back to the 1966 National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act. Nearly 300 refuges in 44 states would be threatened by this precedent.

Ignoring recent National Academies findings that oil development has caused wildlife and their habitats harm, we are considering a bill that finds oil exploration and development “compatible” with the mission of the refuge, that relies on an Environmental Impact Statement from 1987, and that doesn't allow the Secretary of the Interior to consider a “no

leasing” alternative.

Faced with reclamation liabilities that the General Accounting Office estimates could be as high as \$6 billion for the current state of development, we are considering allowing the oil industry to invade into the only portion – less than 5% of the North Slope – that is currently off-limits.

When will we realize that the road to energy independence will never run through the Arctic Refuge? Rational energy policy will begin the day that Congress drops any idea of turning the Refuge into a filling station and, instead, grants this extraordinary area the full Wilderness Act protection it deserves.

The American People sense in their bones that the value of the Arctic Refuge should never be measured in barrels of oil or employee work days or drops in the budget deficit bucket.

They consider it priceless, one – of – a – kind, a national environmental treasure that should not be sacrificed by this Congress or this Committee. Not now. Not ever.