



Feinstein Joins 14 Senate Colleagues Urge Rejection of Arctic Drilling Measure

*- Coalition of Senators oppose any measure to circumvent legislative process by attaching
Arctic drilling to must-pass budget bill –*

March 9, 2006

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) joined fourteen of her Senate colleagues today in a letter to Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) making clear their strong opposition to any move to authorize drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge through the budget process.

“To those who claim drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is an answer to our oil shortage, I profoundly disagree,” Senator Feinstein said. **“We cannot drill our way out of this problem. It is my hope that Majority Leader Frist does not allow the Budget process to be used to open up this crown jewel of the National Wildlife Refuge system.”**

The following is the text of the letter Senator Feinstein sent to Majority Leader Frist along with her colleagues Senators Cantwell (D-Wash.), Reid (D-Nev.), Bingaman (D-N.M.), Lieberman (D-Conn.), Kerry (D-Mass.), Clinton (D-N.Y.), Boxer (D-Calif.), Reed (D-R.I.), Leahy (D-Vt.), Senators Durbin (D-Ill.), Menendez (D-N.J.), Harkin (D-Iowa), and Obama (D-Ill.):

March 9, 2006

The Honorable William H. Frist
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Frist:

We are writing to voice our strong opposition to the inclusion in the Budget Resolution of assumed revenues and a reconciliation instruction for the Energy and Natural Resources Committee linked to opening the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas leasing and development. Should this language move forward to the floor of the Senate, we can assure you that every effort will be made to strike this reconciliation instruction.

We object to the inclusion of the Arctic Refuge oil and gas leasing revenues for two specific reasons. First, it is irresponsible to base our Nation's budget on the highly speculative projection of lease revenue from the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. As certain members of the Budget Committee have already pointed out, there is considerable uncertainty regarding the level of revenues that would be obtained from leasing portions of the Arctic Refuge, despite the President's fiscal year 2007 budget proposal assuming \$8 billion and the Congressional Budget Office assuming \$6 billion in revenues.

Secondly, we oppose using the reconciliation process to open the Arctic Refuge to drilling because it would limit consideration of this highly controversial issue. Debate over whether to drill the Arctic Refuge's Coastal Plain has been ongoing for decades, giving rise to considerable passion in the Senate among Americans from all across the country. By assuming enactment of legislation to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development in its budget reconciliation instruction to the Energy Committee last year, the Budget Committee created a situation in which the legislation considered by the Senate exempted oil and gas development in the Refuge from the normal mineral leasing and environmental laws that govern oil and gas development on all other public lands. Use of the budget reconciliation process to open the Refuge to energy production effectively precludes application of even minimal environmental protections, and prevents the consideration and debate that this important matter warrants.

We also understand that the reconciliation process is being used to address only one Senate Committee's jurisdiction, and is clearly intended to authorize oil and gas leasing in the Arctic Refuge. This underscores that the real objective of the process is not deficit reduction, but rather to circumvent normal Senate process and procedure with respect to this controversial subject.

We hope that you will take steps to ensure that the Budget process is not used in this manner.

Sincerely,

Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senator

Harry Reid
U.S. Senator

Jeff Bingaman
U.S. Senator

Joe Lieberman
U.S. Senator

John Kerry
U.S. Senator

Hillary Rodham Clinton
U.S. Senator

Barbara Boxer
U.S. Senator

Jack Reed
U.S. Senator

Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senator

Dick Durbin
U.S. Senator

Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator

Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator

Tom Harkin
U.S. Senator

Barack Obama
U.S. Senator

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