

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 29, 2010

Dear fellow Democratic Senator:

As the Senate prepares to adjourn for the Election Recess without measurable progress on national energy legislation, I was especially disappointed to see three of my colleagues seeking your support for the "strongest possible protections" for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in my state. I urge you to refrain from signing on to their "Dear Colleague" letter.

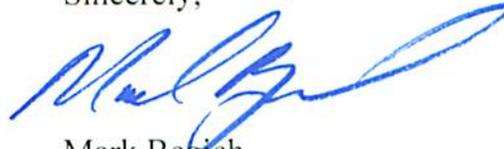
As you know, our nation imports about two-thirds of the oil we consume annually, much of it from countries which simply don't like us. Instead of sending \$100 million a day to Iran, I believe we need to increase our domestic energy production. My own state of Alaska, long considered America's energy storehouse, is ready and willing to help. We have billions of barrels of oil and trillions of cubic feet of natural gas on land and in shallow water off-shore poised for responsible development.

The Arctic Refuge, in Alaska's remote northeast corner, is 19.6 million acres, five times the size of Connecticut. Already, 92 percent of ANWR is in wilderness and refuge status, permanently protected from development. Compared to the overall size of the Refuge, the relatively small 1.5 million-acre portion set aside "for the study of oil and gas exploration" could hold 16 billion barrels of oil. Small gravel drill pads, extended reach drilling and seasonal restrictions would minimize impacts, limiting development to less than one-tenth of a percent of the coastal plain.

Permanently prohibiting development of the Arctic Refuge's energy resources would be irresponsible as this nation continues to import increasingly more of its energy from foreign sources.

We certainly welcome all Americans marking half a century of the Arctic Refuge's existence this year. But decisions about ANWR's future energy development require more serious discussion, including with Alaskans, than a 50th anniversary celebration.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator