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Invited Testimony before the House Subcommittee on Energy and
Mineral Resources

Regarding the

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

September 21, 2011

Good Morning Chairman Hastings and Committee Members,

Thank you for both inviting and allowing me to testify on a subject so important and timely; not only to the people I represent, and the people of Alaska, but most, if not all, Americans as well. My oral testimony will be the same as my written remarks.

My name is Tim Sharp and I am the Business Manager of the Alaska District Council of Laborers. I represent approximately five thousand Alaskan Union members who are involved with the construction of roads, bridges, buildings, pipelines, processing facilities, pump stations, gathering centers, as well as, workers in the public sector, tourism, manufacturing, maintenance and other miscellaneous industry sectors.

I began working on the North Slope of Alaska in 1975 at the age of twenty developing the Trans Alaska Pipeline, Prudhoe Bay, Kuparuk and other satellite fields. I have stayed active on the issues that surround development, and infrastructure expansion for both the industry and the workers I represent in the field today.

I come here today not to be used as a political foil against our President and wish to avoid the appearance of any type of the political posturing that seems to be prevalent during an election year in both Houses.

I am not supportive of the “Drill Baby Drill” mentality or similarly empty platitudes, as all oil and gas development in Alaska should be measured, planned, and well thought out with projects that pencil out, are sustainable, and aggressively engineered environmentally, using cutting edge science and technology. We live there, it is our home. That being said, I firmly believe that the development of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge can meet these criteria.

I don't want to engage or argue the weight, or lack of weight, of the merit of the voluminous mountains of fluff and rhetoric on both sides of this charged issue. Whether you choose to believe it to be the "Serengeti Plain of America" or a cold, desolate, God forsaken, mosquito infested wasteland, there is no all encompassing absolute that can describe ANWR. The truth is it is neither of the two. It falls somewhere in the middle.

The picture of the ANWR debate has not really changed in twenty years however, the frame surrounding the picture has. We are at a time in America where our economy needs an employment jumpstart, energy costs only continue to escalate and foreign dependence on oil seems to make our economy and our businesses vulnerable in a way I am personally uncomfortable with.

We seem to be caught up in contemplating our navel on process, permitting and politics at a time when it is obvious to most that we have oil in Alaska, development would generate thousands of needed jobs, and the leverage and impact the foreign producers could have on us would lessen. Instead, inaction trumps common sense and legitimate need.

Balance those considerations against the possible environmental impact development could have on ANWR. I have personally witnessed herds of caribou gathering around pipelines and modules in Prudhoe Bay to enjoy the only shade in hundreds of miles or to rub up against them to shake the mosquitoes and flies surrounding them. However, let there be no doubt even with improved directional drilling and using all tools available to them, there would be some small impact.

The minimal acreage needed for development in ANWR would be a great opportunity for the environmental community and the oil industry to work closely together and show what American technology

and ingenuity could do. Where better than ANWR to create an “environmental gold standard” for oil and gas development?

I also know of the varied opinions of both some of the Gwi’chin and Eskimo people and respect the varied opinions of some of their leaders. But some of their members are my members as well and many of them don’t believe that responsible development of ANWR will be detrimental to their culture or lifestyle.

There have been numerous geologic studies done over the years in regards to the amount of oil and gas that ANWR holds. They speak for themselves. But using the most conservative estimates on the amount of the reserves, the amount of energy it would produce for our country and the tens of thousands of good paying jobs it would generate in Alaska, Washington, Oregon and many other states, it is time to take another look at both the environmental risk and economic reward.

I am a strong proponent of alternative energy, but also a realist in terms of the timelines associated with developing it to the point of it adequately offsetting the energy needed by most of our petrochemical based industries. I am addressing today the need for political action to offset our dwindling energy reserves in the next five to ten years but equally important the need for jobs today. Another study will simply not equate to the leadership we need to see on this issue. Please act.

Thank you for your time.

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