



CONTACT: Anna Peterson, 612-735-2402
anna@conservationcommunications.org

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Senator Cory Gardner Voted to Open the Arctic Refuge to Drilling and Colorado Businesses Are Furious

Durango, Colorado: Senator Cory Gardner voted today in his role on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, to allow drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as part of a tax bill moving toward a full Senate vote. Protection of the Refuge has been supported by Democrats and Republicans since 1980, and the most recent inclusion of drilling into the federal budget process is the most aggressive attempt to open the Refuge in decades.

Nearly [200 Colorado businesses](#) across the state from outdoor gear companies to breweries, wineries, and distilleries are angered that Colorado Senator Gardner voted to pave the way for opening America's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to fossil fuel drilling. These hundreds of Colorado businesses, as well as faith leaders, veterans, and sportsmen have spoken with, written, and asked Senator Gardner to protect America's largest wildlife refuge many times over the past few months.

"Senator Gardner keeps telling us he's a public lands supporter, but you can't support public lands and then vote to open America's largest and wildest Refuge to fossil fuel development. Adding Arctic Refuge drilling to the budget process is sneaky and callous. It's a way to line the pockets of the fossil fuel industry by going around regular law-making procedures. Senator Gardner should be ashamed of himself, and he won't last as a Colorado Senator with this stance." said Auden Schendler Senior Vice President of Sustainability at Aspen Skiing Company and signer of an [outdoor industry business letter](#) addressed to Senator Gardner asking him to protect the Arctic Refuge.

In a letter sent last week to constituents, Senator Gardner said that "It is important to me that future generations are able to experience the same natural beauty that all Coloradans know so well. As a Member of the United States Senate, I take seriously my duty to ensure our incredible environment is there for the next generation to enjoy."

"The Outdoor Retailer show is moving to Colorado mostly because of our state leaders' appreciation for, and protection of, America's public lands. Federal public lands belong to all of us – how they are managed should be a national issue, not determined by one state. Senator Gardner has failed our nation today by voting to open America's irreplaceable Arctic Refuge to drilling. Once the Refuge is drilled, the landscape will be changed for generations," said Sarah Tingey, Director of Operations & Outreach for Alpacka Raft in Mancos, one of over 160 Colorado companies who are asking Senator Gardner to not open the Arctic Refuge to fossil fuel development.

Corey Odell, with Odell Brewing Company, and signer of the [brewery business letter](#), said, "Protecting America's public lands isn't a partisan issue, it's just the right thing to do. This effort to open the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas development is short sighted and poorly reasoned. The Arctic Refuge drilling authorization is being shoved through in a tax bill. We will not forget that Senator Gardner has broken our trust by voting for such a significant public lands policy."

More about the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Budget Process:

The coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is the wildest place left in America, and is known as the biological heart of the protected refuge. This area provides vital denning habitat for polar bears, and is the calving ground of the 197,000-strong Porcupine Caribou Herd that sustains the communities and culture of Alaska's indigenous Gwich'in people. The area is currently off-limits to oil and gas development due to decades-long bipartisan protection.

The bill, introduced by Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski on November 9th, would allocate 50 percent revenue sharing divided equally between the state of Alaska and the federal government. By attaching Arctic Refuge drilling to the larger budget allows it to move through by a simple majority vote without the possibility of a Democratic filibuster. On October 19, the Senate rejected an amendment to the budget resolution, introduced by Washington Senator Maria Cantwell, that would have removed the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee's ability to write the pro-drilling legislation. Senator Gardner voted with the majority of 52 votes vs. 48 voting for the amendment.