

November 17, 2011

Dear Chairman Hastings, Ranking Member Markey, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Mark Helmericks. I am a resident of the North Slope Borough of Alaska.

Thank you for the invitation to appear before your Committee and offer testimony on H.R. Bill 3470. Our country is experiencing a bit a slump, and with people needing good jobs, I am glad to assist in wise and effective actions that help bring work to our citizens. Making oil Federal oil reserves available for Alaska's petroleum industry is one of the best such actions I know of.

First, a bit of background on myself. You will hear many statistics, studies, and positions from well qualified specialists and experts. I do not have these abilities. Today, I'm only going to speak of things I have seen with my own eyes, or done with my own hands. Politically speaking, I'm non-partisan and philosophically consider myself an environmentalist.

I have been a resident of Alaska's North Slope for 53 years. In short, my entire life. I was born, raised, home schooled, and have worked nearly my whole career in this region. I grew up eating caribou meat. My family traces its roots back even farther, into the 1940's, when my father canoed down the Colville River and homesteaded land at the edge of the Arctic Ocean. I have spent many days in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. In fact, I climbed Mt Chamberlain, the highest peak, for my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, and Lake Schrader remains my favorite place to go fishing. I have seen that care of the environment and oil production can, and do, co-exist.

I have worked a number of different jobs, including being a subsistence hunter, a commercial fisherman, a logger, a truck driver, a bush pilot. I now own a solid waste and industrial supply company. The work in the oil industry has been the best, by far. It is well paid, at nearly twice the average wage in Alaska, stable, and safe. Staff is trained continuously throughout their career. It is progressive. As a father with twin children, it a place I can recommend as a career choice for my son. And for my daughter.

Alaska has a world-class oil industry infrastructure. But it is only running a 1/3 capacity. We could literally ship another million barrels a day if there was access to the resource. Due to the circumstances of land ownership in Alaska, the overwhelming majority of new reserves are under Federal control. Nearly all the Arctic oil development to date has been with State reserves. But to keep the investment from dying from undercapacity, and bring benefits to America like well paying long term jobs, we are respectfully asking for access to Federal oil.

I thank you for the honor of appearing before you today, and I welcome any questions you have.