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REPRESENTATIVE DAVE TALERICO

Sponsor Statement for House Joint Resolution 4

“Urging the United States Congress to pass legislation to open the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development; urging the United States Department of the Interior to recognize the private property rights of owners of land in and adjacent to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; relating to oil and gas exploration, development, production, and royalties; and relating to renewable and alternative energy technologies.”

When the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act was passed by Congress in 1980, 1.5 Million acres within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) was set aside for oil and gas development if Congress gives approval. In 1998, the United States Geological Survey studied the section of ANWR that was set aside for development and estimated that the “1002 Area” held over ten billion barrels of oil reserves. Though multiple attempts have been made by Congress to open the 1002 Area for development, it still remains closed.

A primary concern with allowing oil development is that the activity would disrupt the Porcupine caribou herd and possibly cause the caribou population to decline. Though this same argument was brought forward against developing Prudhoe Bay, the caribou herds in the area have increased despite many years of oil development.

As production on the Alaska North Slope continues to dramatically fluctuate, additional oil fields must be developed in order to maintain the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System which has been a critical piece of infrastructure for the State and Nation’s energy needs.

HJR 4 urges Congress to take action and open the 1002 Area to oil and gas development. The resolution also urges that if development is allowed, it is done in such a way that protects indigenous tribes in the area as well as the Porcupine caribou herd. Though similar resolutions have passed the Alaska Legislature, HJR 4 serves as a continuing reminder to the President and Congress that opening ANWR is not only in Alaska’s best interest, but in the Nation’s best interest as well.

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