

From: Robert Redford [mailto:biogemsnews@savebiogems.org]
Sent: Tuesday, October 30, 2001 11:30 PM

Dear Friend,

It is understandable that we Americans feel an almost reflexive need for unanimity in trying times like these. As a nation, we are rightly consumed with responding to the terrorist attacks on September 11th. But, at some point -- and I think we're beginning to get there -- we need to take a long-term view even as we are reacting to the current crisis. Really important domestic issues facing us before all of this happened -- education, energy and the environment, health care -- still have the same dimension and consequence. But we have to recognize that it's much more difficult to discuss and debate them in the aftermath of Sept. 11th. Unfortunately, disagreement is sometimes characterized as unpatriotic during times such as these and open, thoughtful discourse is somewhat muted. The gravity of the current situation is not lost on any of us and we all want to do what's right to insure our national security. It is with this in mind that I felt compelled to write you today.

A handful of determined U.S. senators, encouraged by the White House, are arguing that national security requires the Senate to rush a pro-oil energy bill into law. They have vowed to hold up normal Senate business and attach the bill to every piece of legislation that comes to the Senate floor. So far they have failed in what The Boston Globe is calling "oil opportunism." But with President Bush, himself, now calling for rushed passage of this disastrous bill, intense pressure is building on Senate leaders to succumb to the emotions of the moment. Using our national tragedy as an opportunity to advance the narrow interests of the oil lobby would not be in the best interest of the public. This bill, already passed by the House, would not only open the Arctic Refuge to oil rigs, it would also pave the way for energy companies to exploit and destroy pristine areas of Greater Yellowstone and other gems of our natural heritage. As important, it would do nothing to address energy security.

I'm asking for your immediate help in stopping this legislation. After reading my letter I hope you'll take action at <http://www.savebiogems.org/arctic/index.asp?src=ab0110a> and then forward this letter to your friends and colleagues.

Last spring, the Bush administration and some members of Congress said we had to pass the president's oil-friendly energy bill because we were facing the most serious energy crisis since 1973. But here we are, a mere six months later, and the energy crisis has vanished. Due to a slowing economy and falling demand, the prices for gasoline, natural gas and home heating oil have plunged. Meanwhile, the much-feared "summer of blackouts" in California never happened, largely because consumers and businesses made dramatic cuts in energy use by launching the most successful statewide conservation campaign in history.

With no energy crisis to scare us with, the administration and pro-oil senators are now promoting their "Drill the Arctic" plan under the guise of national security and energy independence. Don't buy it. It would take ten years to bring Arctic oil to market, and when it arrives it would never equal more than two percent -- a mere drop in the bucket -- of all the oil we consume each year. Our nation simply doesn't have enough oil to drill our way to energy independence or even to affect world oil prices.

We possess a mere 3 percent of the world's oil reserves, but we consume fully 25 percent of the world's oil supply. We could drill the Arctic Refuge, Greater Yellowstone, and every other wildland in America and we'd still be importing oil, still be paying worldwide prices for domestic oil, and still be vulnerable to wild gyrations in price and supply. As The Atlanta Constitution put it: "Burning through our tiny oil supply faster will not make our country more secure." I'd go further: increasing our dependence on oil, whether that oil comes from the Persian Gulf or the Arctic Refuge, practically guarantees national *insecurity*. And we know that it will bring more habitat destruction, more oil spills, more air pollution, and more global warming. The public health implications will be devastating.

If our nation wants to declare energy independence, then we have no choice but to reduce our appetite for oil. There's no other way. We need to rely on smarter and cleaner ways to power our economy. We have the technology right now to increase fuel economy standards to 40 miles per gallon. If we phased in that

standard by 2012 we'd save 15 times more oil than the Arctic Refuge is likely to produce over 50 years. We could also give tax rebates for existing hybrid gas-electric vehicles that get as much as 60 mpg. We could invest in public transit. We could launch an "Apollo Project" to bring fuel cells and hydrogen fuel down to earth, allowing us to begin the mass production of vehicles that emit only water as a by-product. The list goes on and on.

In this climate of national trauma and war, it is up to us -- the people -- to ensure that reason prevails and our natural heritage survives intact. The preservation of irreplaceable wildlands like the Arctic Refuge and Greater Yellowstone is a core American value. I have never been more appreciative of the wisdom of that value than during these past few weeks. When we are filled with grief and unanswerable questions it is often nature that we turn to for refuge and comfort. In the sanctuary of a forest or the vastness of the desert or the silence of a grassland, we can touch a timeless force larger than ourselves and our all-too-human problems. This is where the healing begins. Those who would sell out this natural heritage -- this spiritual heritage -- would destroy a wellspring of American strength. What's worse, their rush to exploit the wildness that feeds our souls won't do a thing to solve our energy problems.

There are plenty of sensible and patriotic ways to guarantee our nation's energy security, but destroying the Arctic Refuge is not one of them. Please tell that to your senators. They urgently need to hear it because the pressure is on to move this pro-oil bill to a vote in the next few weeks. It will take you only a minute to send them an electronic message from NRDC's SaveBioGems website.

Go to <http://www.savebiogems.org/arctic/index.asp?src=ab0110a>

And please forward this message to your family and friends. Millions of Americans need to know about this cynical attempt to promote the interests of energy companies at the expense of everyone else.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Redford