

December 13, 2021

The Honorable Kyrsten Sinema
The Honorable Mark Kelly
United States Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Senators Sinema and Kelly,

As Arizona faith leaders we view the refuge as a special place in God's creation that stands alone in its unique wildness, ecological integrity, beauty, spiritual significance, and recreational opportunities. We are called to stand up for God's creation, especially when it is harmed or threatened. We therefore ask you to repeal the Arctic Refuge Drilling program enacted during the Trump Administration and prevent any exploration or drilling on this ecologically sensitive region by reinstating full protection for this precious region.

The lease sales in the Arctic Refuge were predicted to generate \$1 billion in revenues as a way of offsetting tax cuts, but when the sales were held, they raised a trivial-by-comparison \$12.1 million from a total of three bidders. This demonstrates a grave overestimation of the appetite for oil exploration in the Refuge and shows that there is little to be gained by continuing to hold these leases.

Faith communities, including those in Arizona, have long opposed drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, not only because of our concern for stewarding God's creation, but also because of our commitment to stand with the Gwich'in and other Alaska Native people. The exploitation of fossil fuels that contribute to climate change threatens the subsistence practices of the Gwich'in people. Drilling would also threaten sacred spaces held in reverence by the Gwich'in. Our commitment to protecting the Arctic Refuge is inspired by our dedication to defending all of God's creation, including the fundamental rights of the Gwich'in to secure their livelihoods and ensure their religious liberties.

President Biden's decision to temporarily suspend the leases on this land earlier this year was an important step in the right direction, but we must do more. If we are to protect the Arctic Refuge, we must do so completely and unequivocally. We must realign our priorities and not take actions that are economically questionable and done at the expense of fragile ecosystems and the communities that rely on them for survival.

You have an opportunity right now to correct a serious violation of human rights and environmental justice by supporting provisions in the budget reconciliation package that protect the Arctic Refuge and its people, and we urge you to take it. There is very little to be gained by continuing to hold lease sales in this sacred place and much to be lost.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Stephanie Aaron, Congregation Chaverim, Tucson

Rev. Troy C. Allen, Sr., South Mountain Baptist Church, Phoenix
Rev. Doug Bland, Tempe Community Christian Church
Rev. Albert Bolden, Lawrence Memorial AME Zion, Mesa
Dr. Cathy Clardy-Patterson, Fountain of Life House of Worship, Phoenix
Deacon Donald Crawford, St. Andrew the Apostle, Chandler
Rev. Christine Dance, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix
Pastor Gregory Dansby, Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, Mesa
Billie Fidlin, Director of Justice, Desert Southwest Conference UMC, Phoenix
Rev. Jan Olav Flaaten, Faith Lutheran Church, Phoenix
Rev. Sherman Fort, The Word Church, Mesa
Rev. Rock Fremont, Jr., Shepherd of the Hills UCC, Phoenix
Rachel Gilmore, Missional Consultant, Central UMC, Phoenix
Maria Hase, Desert Southwest Conference, United Methodist Women, Social Action
Coordinator, Phoenix
Rev. Ratcliff Hughes, Prince Chapel AME, Tucson
Sarah King, former chair of Arizona Faith Network Earth Care Commission, Flagstaff
Pastor Rebekah Krevens, Foothills Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Glendale
Rev. Tom Martinez, Desert Palm United Church of Christ, Tempe
Rev. Marvin L. Hugley, Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist, Tucson
Rev. Dr. Eric Ledermann, University Presbyterian Church, Tempe
Rev. Amos Lewis, Rising Star Baptist, Tucson
Rev. Terry Mackey, Pilgrim Rest Baptist, Phoenix
Rev. Terry Marks, Greater Bethel AME, Phoenix
Rev. Karen MacDonald, Rincon Congregational United Church of Christ, Tucson
The Rev. Kenneth G. Page, Pastor of Orangewood Presbyterian Church
Rev. Michael Patzloff, Faith United Methodist Church - Phoenix, Glendale
Rabbi Nina Perlmutter, Emerita Congregation Lev Shalom, Flagstaff
Rev. Staccato Powell, Fisher AME Zion, Phoenix
Khalil Rushdan, Social Justice Manager, Arizona Faith Network, Goodyear
Pastor Victor Rushing, Sr., Progressive Church of God in Christ, Phoenix
Rabbi Jeremy Schneider, Temple Kol Ami, Scottsdale
Rev. D. Grady Scott, Grace Temple Missionary Baptist, Tucson
Rev. Katie Sexton, Executive Director, Arizona Faith Network, Phoenix
Rabbi Dean Shapiro, Joseph Project at Arizona State University, Tempe
Rabbi Bonnie Sharfman, Congregation Kehillah, Phoenix
Pastor Bart Smith, St. Marks Presbyterian Church, Tucson
Pastor Sarah Stadler, Grace Lutheran Church, Phoenix
Rev. Reginald Steele, Kingdom in the Valley Community Church, Phoenix
Dr. Warren Stewart, Sr, First Institutional Baptist, Phoenix
Dr. Benjamin Thomas, Tanner Chapel AME, Phoenix
Rev. Weldon Tucker, Western Metropolitan AME Zion, Buckeye
Rev. Susan Valiquette, United Church of Christ, Phoenix
Rev. Reginald D. Watson, Phillips Memorial Baptist Church, Phoenix
Rev. Ricky Wilson, Faith Christian Center, Phoenix
Dr. David Wade, Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, Mesa
Rev. Patty Willis, Granite Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Prescott

Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz, Valley Beit Midrash, Scottsdale
Pastor Harvey Young, Jr., New Hope Church of God in Christ, Coolidge