

Statement of Brownie Carson in Response to the April 28th Votes on the Budget Resolution That Open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to Oil Drilling and Cuts Environmental Protection

April 29, 2005

We are deeply disappointed in the votes of the US Congress and of Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins in support of a budget that opens up the pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. This will do nothing to address the nation's energy independence and will harm a priceless national treasure. We applaud Representatives Allen and Michaud for their votes to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The budget resolution that was adopted also included a destructive 23% cut to environmental and conservation programs that will impair Maine's ability to protect our rivers from pollution and to purchase parklands and wildlife habitat.

The Bush Administration and Republican Senate leadership boxed our Senators in by forcing them to choose between protecting the Arctic and jobs at Bath Iron Works, two issues that have nothing to do with each other or the budget. This classic political power play demonstrates how utterly irresponsible Senate leadership is and the lengths to which they will go to keep our nation dependent on oil and destroy a valuable, one-of-a-kind national wildlife refuge. This backward thinking does not serve the interests of Maine or our nation.

Maine's Senators have been committed for a long time to protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and to the advancement of a sensible energy policy for Maine and the nation. The real question is, "what will they do now?" We urge Senators Snowe and Collins to explore and follow every possible option to keep fighting to protect the Arctic and to put the US on the path to a clean and more efficient energy future. We also urge them to work to restore critical funding for clean water, clean air and land protection.