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## Dear Barack: Arctic's day has come

The race for president has attracted an impressive field of Americans willing to assume the responsibilities of the White House at a challenging time in our history. All echo the need for change.

None has better captured and articulated this moment than Sen. Barack Obama. His eloquent, nonpartisan message has re-awakened the hopes of many Americans, aspirations that go back to when we severed our bonds with Great Britain to establish a society built on principle, not privilege.

"We are not a collection of red states and blue states," said Obama after his Iowa caucus victory. "We are the United States of America. We are one nation, one people, and our time for change has come. He is rallying "men and women who are not content to settle for the world as it is; who have the courage to make the world as it should be ... who are ready to believe again."

If I were 20 years younger, I would find him and ask, "What can I do?" And I would tell him that Alaska can help our country fulfill his vision.

Those who think the only issue in the North is climate change are missing a historic opportunity. The day of the Arctic has come. Our vast energy resources can dramatically help the people of the world, and this is critical because there is a direct connection between energy and poverty, energy and jobs, energy and the environment, and energy and peace.

Alaska has 35 trillion cubic feet of clean natural gas reserves ready and waiting to help meet America's needs and counterbalance our staggering trade deficit with Asia. And that's just the beginning. The Arctic, including great unexplored basins in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas off Alaska, rivals the Middle East in gas potential.

**WALLY HICKEL**

COMMENT



We need a president who will work with Alaska as we construct a pipeline to transport Alaska's vast gas resources to market. The fastest, most economic and environmental approach is to build a line within the trans-Alaska oil pipeline corridor, 800 miles from Prudhoe Bay south to Valdez. From there, we can export liquefied natural gas to the U.S. West Coast and world markets.

Also, I want to tell Sen. Obama, and any of the other candidates willing to listen, that the price of freedom doesn't have to be blood. It can be sweat.

Immediately after the invasion of Iraq, I wrote to President Bush saying, "Next time skip the war and get right to the Marshall Plan." A few days later in the White House he thanked me for "my great letter," but it wasn't until last year that the Pentagon finally broadened its mission to "defense, diplomacy and development."

Here again Alaska can help. It was my honor in 2006 to describe to President Vladimir Putin's People's Chamber in Moscow the Alaska economic/political model, a hybrid between commonly owned Russia and democratic America.

I explained to that assembly of 126 eminent Russians, who are exploring new strategies for Russia's future, the unique features of the Alaska system. We are

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governed by a constitutional democracy, but our economy is based on 103 million acres of Alaska state land and resources that are owned in common by the Alaska people.

There are many countries and cultures in the world in addition to Russia that can relate to the Alaska "owner state" design. In those regions, lands and resources are part of the commons. Community comes first. Africa fits that description, as do many countries in Asia and the Middle East. Frustrated by failed socialism and foreign capitalism, they are looking for a new road to prosperity.

Alaska can show the way. And I would like to explain how and why it works to Sen. Obama and any of his rivals who choose to visit. By coming here, they will win some votes. But more important, they may leave with a road map to correct our failed foreign policy and reclaim the American vision Obama so brilliantly describes.

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Walter J. Hickel, 88, was elected as governor of Alaska in 1966 as a Republican and in 1990 as an Alaska Independence Party candidate. From 1969 to 1970 he served as U.S. secretary of the interior. He is the founder of the Institute of the North and his latest book is "Crisis in the Commons: the Alaska Solution."