

Alaskan drilling plan faces House vote

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A controversial plan to drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife refuge may come to a final vote this week in the U.S. House of Representatives.

For 25 years, environmentalists have successfully opposed oil drilling in the 1.5-million-acre Alaskan refuge that shelters birthing caribou as, well as musk oxen and millions of migratory birds, The Washington Post reported Wednesday.

But record-high gasoline prices and recent election Republican election gains have increased support for the proposal that has been attached to the budget bill.

The Senate last week approved the measure and the House is to vote this week on nearly identical language.

"I'm optimistic," Bob Moran, an American Petroleum Institute lobbyist who estimates at least 5 billion barrels of oil lie beneath the refuge, told the Post:

Opponents argue the plan would save Americans just one penny per gallon of gasoline by 2025.

"It's become almost a symbol for both sides," said Cindy Shogan, executive director of the Alaska Wilderness League, which opposes drilling, told the newspaper. "The question is whether the American people and their culture are going to protect the places that are special or develop everything."

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