

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Andrew Baumann, Global Strategy Group & Christine Matthews, Bellwether Research and Consulting
DATE: November 21, 2017
RE: **Bipartisan Survey Findings: Brian Mast's constituents oppose GOP tax plan, Arctic Refuge Drilling**

According to a new bipartisan survey conducted by Global Strategy Group and Bellwether Research in Florida's 18th Congressional District, a large majority – including many Republicans – oppose a proposal in Congress that will allow oil and gas companies to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Opposition to the Republican tax plan also outpaces support. A large number of Congressman Brian Mast's constituents hold intensely negative feelings toward Donald Trump and he can expect a backlash from them if he supports Trump's agenda.

In a balanced debate, pro-drilling arguments lose overwhelmingly to the anti-drilling position and most remain firmly against opening the Arctic Refuge up to drilling. Mast would jeopardize his standing among his constituents with a pro-drilling vote. Nearly half say they will be less favorable toward him if he votes for drilling, including many of the independents and less conservative Republicans who are a large block of his constituents.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS:

- **Trump is far from popular and negative feelings for him are intense:** Mast's constituents give Trump mixed ratings (48% favorable/47% unfavorable) with a large number holding intensely negative feelings for him (41% very unfavorable).
- **Negativity for Trump and his agenda extends to his tax plan:** More of Mast's constituents are against Trump's tax plan than for it (37% support to 39% oppose). This opposition includes a large number of less conservative Republicans (-24 support).
- **A large majority opposes drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge:** Opposition to the proposal to open the Arctic Refuge to drilling exceeds support by 26 points (29% support to 55% oppose).
- **Opposition to drilling extends across partisan lines:** Democrats (-75 support) and independents (-10 support) are strong opponents of drilling. Only conservative Republicans (+26 support) are in favor of the plan. Less conservative Republicans (-39 support) and non-college voters (-29 support), a GOP friendly group, both oppose it. College voters are also overwhelmingly against drilling (-24 support).

- **Pro-drilling arguments fail to persuade and most clearly favor the anti-drilling position:** When Mast's constituents hear arguments on each side, the anti-drilling argument wins over a strong pro-drilling argument by 17 points (54% to 37%). After hearing both sides, a majority is still strongly against drilling (-15 support: 39% support to 54% oppose), including among most less conservative Republicans (-27 support).

***Supporters** of the proposal say opening the Arctic Refuge to responsible energy development will create thousands of jobs, generate billions in revenue, lower the deficit, and reduce our dependence on foreign oil. Exploration would be limited to a small portion of the Refuge and innovations in drilling technology mean there is less risk to the environment. Alaskans support drilling because it will create up to 130 thousand jobs. This is a win-win opportunity and Washington D.C. should not be telling Alaska what they can and can't do.*

***Opponents** of the proposal say drilling in the Arctic Refuge would devastate the largest area of protected wilderness left in America. It would create a vast industrial complex of wells, pipelines, and potential leaks that would ruin this pristine landscape and put iconic wildlife at risk. At a time when the U.S. leads the world in oil and gas production and oil companies are making record profits, it is not necessary to drill here since oil companies already hold hundreds of leases they aren't using on productive land just outside the Refuge.*

- **A vote to open Arctic Refuge to drilling will generate a backlash:** Nearly half of Mast's constituents say they would be less favorable toward him if he supports drilling (49% less favorable/28% more favorable). This vote would especially jeopardize his standing among independents (-6 net change) and less conservative Republicans (-13 net change).

ABOUT THIS POLL

Global Strategy Group & Bellwether Research conducted a survey from November 9-14, 2017 with 250 registered voters in Florida's 18th Congressional district. The results have a margin of error of +/-6.2% and care has been taken to ensure that the survey is weighted to reflect the makeup of our desired universe.