

Bridgewater State University Placement Examination Writing Prompt: (from Aug. 2008)

The Situation:

The US Energy Information Administration estimates on its web page that currently US daily gasoline use requires 388.6 million gallons of oil a day (“Basic Petroleum Statistics,” Energy Information Administration). And according to Steve Hargreaves, commentator for the news program *CNN Money*, as of late March 2008, US gas prices averaged \$3.45 a gallon.

In an attempt to lower current high gasoline prices and to foster US independence from Middle East oil, President George W. Bush has called for the opening of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil exploration and drilling, which could produce up to 27 million gallons of gasoline and diesel fuel a day (Peter Ivanovich, “Bush Again Calls for Drilling,” *Houston Chronicle*, 4 April 2008). But according to the ANWR webpage, this refuge was founded, among other purposes, “. . .to conserve caribou herds, polar bears, grizzly bears, muskox, dall sheep, wolves, wolverines, snow geese, peregrine falcons, other migratory birds, dolly varden, and grayling; to insure necessary water quantity and quality for Alaskans. . .” (US Fish and Wildlife Service—Alaska: National Arctic Wildlife Refuge).

Opponents of Bush’s plan for ANWR argue that such exploration and oil drilling would cause inevitable damage to the Alaskan wilderness and its fragile ecosystem. His opponents suggest that Bush should, instead, release for public consumption some of the millions of gallons of oil that are stockpiled as part of the US Strategic Energy Reserves, but Bush’s administration argues that these reserves are a matter of national security and must not be diminished. In fact, the April 30, 2008 *Houston Chronicle* reported that Bush continues to buy more barrels of gasoline for the strategic Energy Reserves, even at the current high prices.

Your Assignment:

In a well-organized letter addressed to members of the US Congress, take a position on Bush’s proposal, and explain in a clear argument whether or not Congress should accept Bush’s plan to exploit the oil which is suspected to lie beneath the National Arctic Wildlife Refuge. Be sure to explain your reasoning for your audience.