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Article Review 2

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Oil drilling and the policies/restrictions placed on the process by the government has been a topic of great dispute for a long time in our country. In the The New York Times article Energy Security vs. Environment in Alaska, Felicity Barringer discusses the decision on whether or not to expand oil drilling, onshore and offshore, in Alaska. The most important question posed in this article, "what environmental cost is worth the potential gains in energy security" (Barringer n.pag.) is a question of environmental ethics.

As a culture in America, we usually participate more in western ethics. We tend to focus and make decisions on what will benefit humans, sometimes regardless to the harms and effects on the environment. However, there is an argument pertaining to the oil industry that drilling produces effects that are not even in human's best interest. This sentiment is expressed in the movie Gaslands. Throughout the film, families testify that, once oil drilling began in their area, they began getting sick, their water turned bad, and their animals became ill, among other things. While the The New York Times article states that most drilling in Alaska has been done in rural areas, it also describes that drilling companies are moving towards tapping into oil shales closer to inhabited areas, as well as intending to drill in "previously untouched Artic waters" (Barringer, n.pag.). The article also states that, by doing so, the companies would acquire and estimated 549 million

barrels of oil. While this is a massive amount of oil and would be very beneficial to the energy industry, obtaining this oil would be at the expense of the environment. Part of the drilling would take place in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as well as some inhabited areas.

At this point, the government has an important decision to make on whether or not to allow these companies to drill. Do they allow the companies to drill, and side with the portion of people that believe that the environment and the good of few is expendable as long as it is for the greater good, or do they choose to protect the environment? The government has, for the most part in recent history, sided with the oil industry. For example, oil and gas companies were exempt from the Clean Air Act in 1980. For politicians, the decision should be a balancing act on benefitting the "greater good" by obtaining more of one of our main energy sources, but also protecting the environment and the people who may be negatively affected.