

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 17, 2014

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC

Re: Lesser Prairie Chicken Conservation Report

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

As you know, on January 29, 2014, the House passed the Agriculture Act Conference Report by a strong bipartisan vote of 251 to 166. The measure was signed into law (P.L. 113-79) by President Obama in February. Section 2610 of the law specifically required the Secretary to submit an analysis of the cost and effectiveness within 90 days of each activity administered by the Department and its subagencies for the conservation of the lesser prairie chicken. We are dismayed that more than 150 days have elapsed without your Department providing us with this report. The report is not discretionary; it is required by the law.

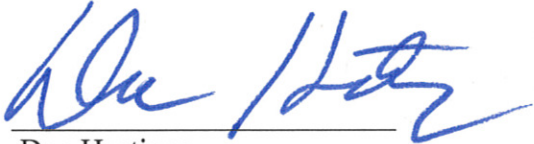
This report is perhaps even more important now, following the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) decision in March 2014 to list the lesser prairie chicken as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In our view, it is unfortunate that this listing, driven by the Department of Interior's settlement deadline negotiated with certain groups, proceeded despite the FWS' approval last fall of a comprehensive five-state rangewide plan that is already demonstrating positive results for the lesser prairie chicken.

Last month, according to a new aerial survey conducted by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the numbers of lesser prairie chicken increased by more than 20 percent to 22,415 from 18,747. This raises questions whether the FWS' listing decision is supported by the best available scientific and commercial data as required by the ESA and whether the five-state rangewide plan and other significant conservation plan measures were given fair and careful consideration prior to the FWS listing decision.

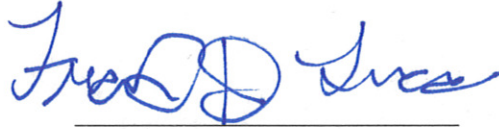
We request that your Department provide this report immediately to appropriate Committees as required by the law, so that millions of private landowners, states and other stakeholders that are investing significant resources for conservation of this species can ensure that the cost and

effectiveness of federal programs are being properly accounted for, and to provide Congress information it requested prior to the listing.

Sincerely,



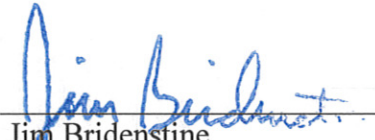
Doc Hastings
Chairman, Natural Resources Committee




Frank Lucas
Chairman, Agriculture Committee



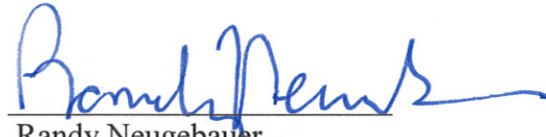
Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress



Jim Bridenstine
Member of Congress



Mike Conaway
Member of Congress



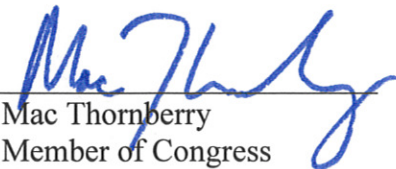
Randy Neugebauer
Member of Congress



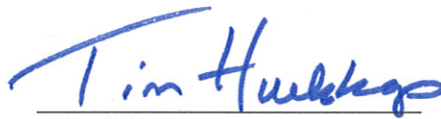
Steve Pearce
Member of Congress



Scott Tipton
Member of Congress



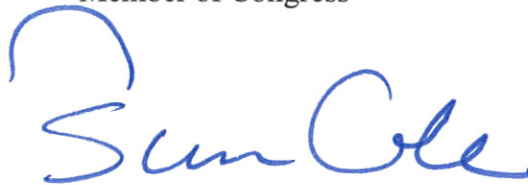
Mac Thornberry
Member of Congress




Tim Huelskamp
Member of Congress



Mike Pompeo
Member of Congress



Tom Cole
Member of Congress



James Lankford
Member of Congress