

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 5, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing today to convey our concern over the many damaging anti-wildlife provisions included in the House and Senate FY 2017 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bills, the House-passed energy package, and the FY 2017 House National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). If enacted, these provisions would undermine the Endangered Species Act (ESA), upend management of our national wildlife refuges and other federally protected lands, and harm individual species at risk of extinction. We urge you to maintain steadfast opposition to all of these provisions and reject any legislation that includes them.

We appreciate the strong Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) issued July 11, opposing sections of the House Interior appropriations bill (H.R. 5538) that would “undermine the ESA and limit the ability of the Fish and Wildlife Service [FWS] to properly protect important species and habitats based on the best available science, including the greater sage grouse, lesser prairie chicken, delta smelt, and certain gray wolf populations”, as well as sections that would “undercut the ESA, preempt California water law, [and] fail to address critical elements of California's complex water challenges . . .”.

Since issuance of the SAP, though, some members of the House majority have significantly escalated their assault on the ESA and other wildlife protections. Policy riders added on the House floor include language detrimental to the survival and recovery of gray wolves across the entire continental United States, Mexican gray wolves in the Southwest, the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, and the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse. Further, language was also added that would threaten the survival of any ESA-listed species when FWS fails to meet its obligation under the ESA to review listed species' status every five years; would limit court access for citizens who seek to enforce the ESA and other bedrock environmental laws; and would block Department of Interior policies designed to conserve wolves, grizzly bears, and other native carnivores on federally protected lands in Alaska. Some of these same provisions are also included in the Senate Interior appropriations bill, S. 3068.

In addition to the numerous appropriations riders in FY 2017 appropriations bills, we are quite concerned by anti-wildlife provisions included in the House-passed energy package. Among the most harmful of these provisions are efforts to: strip existing ESA protections for certain gray wolf populations; gut efforts to combat wildlife trafficking and protect African elephants by restricting the sale of ivory; block Department of Interior efforts to conserve native carnivores on federally protected lands in Alaska; and override vital ESA protections for salmon and other native fish in California.

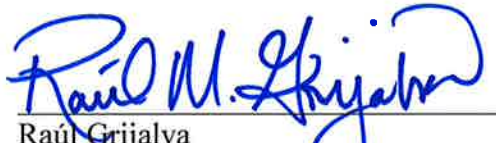
We have further concerns that for the second year running, the NDAA has become a vehicle for meritless attacks on America's most imperiled wildlife. The House NDAA bill (H.R. 4909) would block cooperative efforts to conserve the greater sage-grouse, despite the Department of Defense asserting that these efforts will not "affect military training, operations, or readiness to any significant degree."¹ This provision would tip the scales heavily in favor of development throughout the sage-grouse's 11-state range at the expense of the bird and the sagebrush ecosystem that it and scores of other wildlife species depend upon for survival. Additional House NDAA provisions seek to block new protections for the lesser prairie-chicken and remove existing protections for the American burying beetle – species whose habitat has hardly any overlap with military lands.

We appreciate your consideration, and we urge you to ensure that all of these attacks on the ESA and wildlife are removed from any legislation you sign into law. We owe it to all Americans present and future to protect our natural heritage and leave behind a legacy of sound environmental stewardship.

Sincerely,


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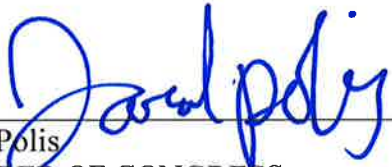
¹ No Need for Sage Grouse Language in Authorization – Pentagon; E&E News; April 27, 2016; Available online: <http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060036309>



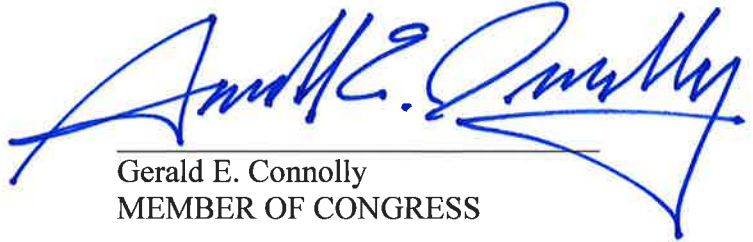
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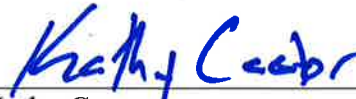
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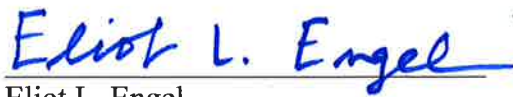
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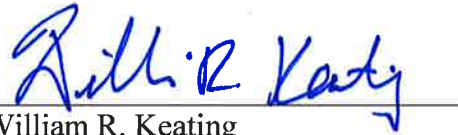
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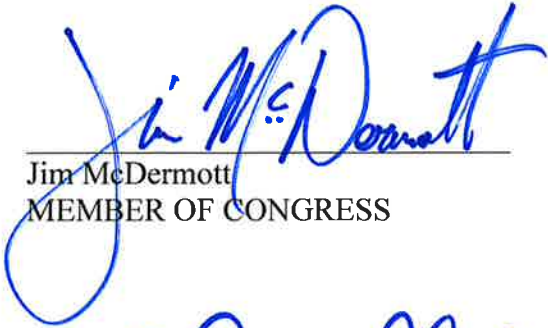
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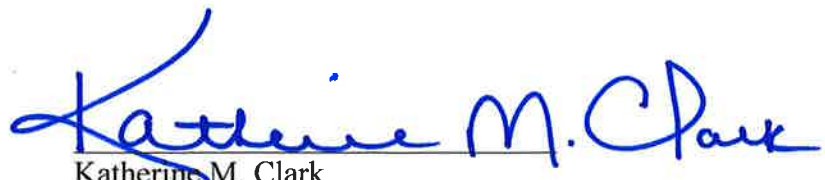
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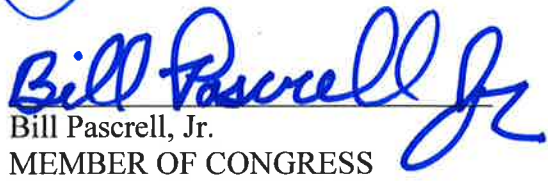
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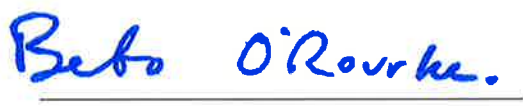
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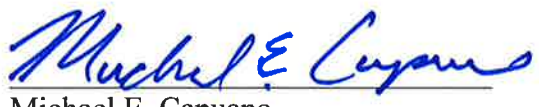
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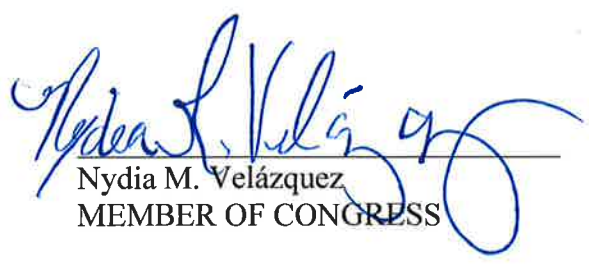
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