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Arizona State Senate

COMMITTEES:

WATER AND ENERGY, CHAIR

RURAL AFFAIRS AND ENVIRONMENT,
VICE CHAIR

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

RULES

April 11th, 2016

Dear Representative Gosar:

RE: PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION: GOVERNMENT LAND GRABS – EXPOSING THE TRUTH

I am writing to you today to express my grave concern and strong opposition to any further unilateral executive actions under the Antiquities Act to designate more land in Arizona as a national monument. Of particular concern is the Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument in Northern Arizona. These actions that are done exclusively for radical environmentalists are an abuse of the Antiquities Act and should most definitely be halted.

There is no threat to the Grand Canyon and its surrounding lands, except by the intrusion and over reach of the federal government.

The federal government granted lands at statehood to Arizona to be held in trust to provide a source of income for schools and other beneficiaries. The proposed monument designation at the Grand Canyon Watershed would severely impact thousands of acres of State Trust Land locked up within its boundaries and deny their beneficial use to the trust. There is no reason to eliminate this benefit for a nonexistent threat.

The proposed designation of the estimated 1.7 million acres in northern Arizona would almost double the amount of acreage designated as national monuments in the state. The proposed national monument would be the second largest in the country. As of 2012, Arizona had the third highest total designated wilderness acreage in the United States with 4.5 million acres. Additionally, another 5.8 million acres were affected by special land use designations, including national monuments. Withdrawal of this vast amount of lands from multiple-use management eliminates or restricts reasonable and thoughtful use of these natural resources for multiple use purposes.

The conservation of wildlife resources across Arizona is the trust responsibility of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission, who voted to oppose the proposed Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument on May 11, 2012. The Commission's analysis found that monument designation can lead to restrictions on proactive wildlife management. National monument designation requires a very narrow management regime and could severely restrict forest management activities, such as scientifically established fire management, erosion control and invasive species treatments. In addition, Arizona's proper management of state forest lands, which includes selective logging, has made for a healthy and prolific environment

for naturally occurring habitat. This has proven effective in preventing habitat loss, as has occurred on federally managed forest lands, through the devastation of wildfires.

This taking of State Trust Lands within the proposed National Monument would be a breach of the sacred trust between the state of Arizona and the federal government that was agreed on in this state's Enabling Act and harms the beneficiaries of the State Trust Lands and Arizona's school children. Multiple-use management of these lands by the United States Bureau of Land Management and the United States Forest Service is based on resource management plans that were developed with public input and have framed the use of these lands since the passage of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act in 1976. The cost benefit of this proposal must be considered with the risks at large for Arizonans. Furthermore, the effects on the customs, cultures and economic well-being of our local communities as well as significant historic and cultural aspects of our local heritage must be taken into account when considering this designation.

While a minority caucus of three of the eleven-member Arizona Congressional delegation and a small group of others advocate to transfer state resources to the federal government, the State of Arizona desires to uphold the congressional designation of the multiple-use policy as per the Federal Land Management Policy Act. This is the best for our citizens, Arizona's cultural identity and economic prosperity.

Arizonans support the protection and ensured vitality of the Grand Canyon, not only for the state, but for the 5 million visitors that travel to enjoy the phenomenon from all around the nation and world. The existing National Park has effective measures in place that have been preserving this mutually beloved treasure.

This new proposed monument disrupts the efficacy of those current practices as well as longstanding federal and state collaborations that have proven mutually beneficial. Any new monument must be approved by the U.S. Congress and I also believe local and state governments should have to approve any new designations that affect their local communities and our state.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to reject and disregard the proposed designation of the Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gail Griffin", is written over a horizontal line.

Gail Griffin
Arizona State Senator