

MOHAVE COUNTY BOARD of SUPERVISORS

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BUSTER D. JOHNSON
SUPERVISOR DISTRICT 3

September 24, 2018

The Honorable Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Chairman
Congressional Western Caucus
2057 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Gosar:

I am writing this letter in support of the Endangered Species Act Modernization Package. As the District III Supervisor for Mohave County, Arizona, and Chairman of the Quadstate Local Government Authority, I feel that rural counties in the Southwestern United States will drastically benefit from this package of bills. As you know, I have been a County Supervisor for over twenty years and Chairman of Quadstate for ten. While I feel that the protection of our most endangered species in this Country is crucial, amendments and revisions to the Endangered Species Act have been a long time coming. Overall, this package of bills is a positive step forward for local governments and endangered species, and I fully support the passage of these bills.

While the ESA has always included language that required the federal government to involve State and local governments in the process, there have been many incidents in which those promises of collaboration have fallen through. The language in the Lamp Act and Empowers Act puts a greater emphasis on states and local governments being involved in the process at every level from species listing, delisting and species recovery. Ensuring that local government has a voice at the table and that its voice is heard is crucial. Local government often has more detailed information of conditions and population status than do the federal wildlife and land management agencies. If nothing else, the explicit input will provide broader confirmation on conditions, or better identify gaps where adequate data does not exist.

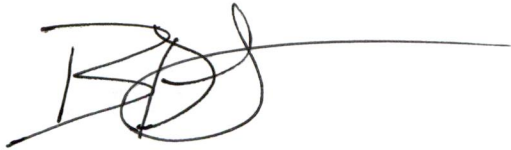
By including states and local governments in the recovery process, I strongly believe that we can finally focus on recovery. Frequently, policies and plans are put into place by leaders and individuals well over two thousand miles away in Washington D.C., when they should be made by those locally on the ground and those who interact with these species on a daily basis. I feel these bills are a step in that direction, so we can finally help these species recover and not simply put them on some list.

I applaud several key aspects of this package and specifically on using the totality of the best scientific knowledge available. The Quadstate Local Government Authority encompasses over 50,000 square miles in the Southwest. The Authority has been heavily involved in the recovery of the Mojave and Sonoran Desert Tortoises. We have always pushed on the emphasis that the federal government needs to focus on the real issues related to the endangerment of these species such as disease and predation and stop the restrictive policies and programs that continue to fail. In over thirty years, we have spent well beyond \$100 million on the recovery of the Desert Tortoise, yet have no evidence to show that we have saved a single one.

The Petition Act included in this package is something that has been much needed for quite some time. Often, species are listed not because they are endangered, but because of court cases. Environmental groups are suing to have these species listed and the Service is given unrealistic time frames to determine if they are truly endangered. I am hopeful that this problem will eliminate itself by the passing of these bills. Listing a species that is not truly endangered can be very burdensome on local government and economic development opportunity.

I want to applaud the work this committee has done in the drafting of these bills and want to thank you for allowing me the time to comment on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "BDJ", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Buster D. Johnson
Mohave County Supervisor
District III