

**American Bird Conservancy \* American Rivers \* Animal Welfare Institute  
Californians for Western Wilderness \* Center for Biological Diversity \* Clean Water Action  
Defenders of Wildlife \* Earthjustice \* Endangered Species Coalition \* Environmental  
Defense Fund \* Epic—Environmental Protection Information Center \* Grand Canyon  
Trust \* Grand Canyon Wildlands Council \* Humane Society of the United States \* Idaho  
Conservation League \* Klamath Forest Alliance \* League of Conservation Voters \* National  
Audubon Society \* Natural Resources Defense Council \* Rocky Mountain Wild  
Sierra Club \* The Wilderness Society \* The Wildlands Network \* Western Nebraska  
Resources Council \* WildEarth Guardians\* Wild Utah Project**

**RE: Please Support the Tsongas Amendment to Strike the Sage-Grouse Listing Delay  
Language on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)**

April 28, 2015

Dear Representative,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we urge you to **support an amendment that will be offered by Rep. Niki Tsongas to strike** language on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) from Representative Rob Bishop which would delay an Endangered Species Act (ESA) listing decision for the greater sage-grouse for at least ten years and undermine the outcome of ongoing state and federal collaboration. This reckless provision does not belong on national defense legislation. It inappropriately rescinds federal authority on public lands, could wipe out populations of greater sage-grouse across much of the West, and could further jeopardize the existence of the species. It is one of the most egregious political attacks on the ESA in this Congress.

**This provision does not belong on the NDAA.**

The NDAA is one of the most important pieces of legislation that Congress passes each year. The Department of Defense (DOD) did not request this provision, nor will it benefit from it. This provision will do nothing to enhance military readiness. There is little overlap between greater sage-grouse priority areas for conservation and military reservations. Moreover, the ESA has already been amended to exempt DOD lands or other geographical areas owned or controlled by the DOD, or designated for its use, from critical habitat designation under the ESA if the managing military branch has prepared an approved Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) (16 U.S.C. § 1533(a)(3)(B)(i)). All affected military installations where sage-grouse have been observed have already developed INRMPs. In fact, DOD lands and activities would be among the least affected by a potential listing for greater sage-grouse under the ESA. This provision is clearly not intended to benefit the DOD, and it does not belong on the NDAA.

**This provision is a brazen power grab of federal lands.**

The bill language would take the unprecedented step of transferring oversight of as much as 60 million acres of federal lands that are home to sage-grouse to western states by requiring that all federal conservation strategies comply with lesser state guidance for managing the bird. This is right in line with several other attempts in this Congress to give away federal assets.

**This provision would ensure rapid declines of many populations of greater sage-grouse.**

Populations of greater sage-grouse have plummeted by as much as 90 percent from historic numbers. A new study just released reported that sage-grouse populations further declined by at least 55 percent between 2007 and 2013. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has already determined the sage-grouse may be threatened with extinction and is currently considering whether to list the bird under the ESA. The potential for listing is driving an unprecedented planning process to implement new measures to conserve sage-grouse and its habitat across the West. Delaying a decision on listing and interrupting the ongoing conservation efforts—and putting states in charge of managing sage-grouse on federal lands—would remove incentives and potential safeguards necessary to save the species.

Again, please support the Tsongas amendment to strike Representative Bishop's misguided and inappropriate language on the NDAA undermining needed protections and delaying a listing decision for the greater sage-grouse.

Sincerely,

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