

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
B-308 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and
Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum,

As you begin work on the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we write to you in strong opposition to any provisions which would undermine the Antiquities Act and effectively block the protection of new national parks and monuments.

As you may know, nearly half of our national parks were originally protected as national monuments via the Antiquities Act. Since it was signed into law by President Teddy Roosevelt in 1906, the Antiquities Act has been used responsibly by presidents of both parties to swiftly protect places of significant natural, military, cultural and historic interest including the Grand Canyon and Statue of Liberty as national monuments. Earlier this month President Obama designated the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument, which will preserve in perpetuity the historical headquarters of the National Women's Party and serve as a lasting monument to the Women's Suffrage Movement. During the National Park Service's (NPS) Centennial year we should be celebrating our system of national parks and monuments and ensuring the continuation of the next century of "America's best idea".

Instead, over 20 separate bills and amendments have already been introduced in the 114th Congress to gut the Antiquities Act and block the creation of new national monuments. These attacks on one of our nation's most critical conservation tools – without which our most popular national parks may not be what they are today – are entirely out of step with the public and continue to generate enormous controversy and bipartisan opposition.

Hundreds of organizations across the country representing millions of Americans from a broad array of interests including sportsmen, cultural heritage, historic preservation, evangelicals, outdoor recreation, business, chambers of commerce, local officials, Native American governments, and many others have vocally opposed past efforts to block new national monuments. According to Colorado College's Conservation in the West Poll released in January, 80% of western voters support "future presidents continuing to protect existing public lands as national monuments." This poll reinforces other surveys that document widespread public opposition to congressional attacks on new parks.

Recent successful community-led efforts to protect treasured public lands like Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument included robust public meetings prior to designations, thousands of public comments, and close contact with stakeholders to help guide management plans for newly protected sites and make recommendations for recreation and other uses. Monument designations occur solely on existing federal lands – lands owned jointly by all Americans. No monument designation has ever been used to "seize" private property. Nor do proclamations result in "locking up" the land or restricting access. In fact, monument designations are among the more flexible land protection

designations and allow for existing uses to continue, including grazing, wildfire prevention, OHV use on designated trails, military training and readiness activities, hunting and fishing, as well as honoring existing rights including rights-of-way and valid oil and gas leases.

National Monument designations can also be strong drivers of economic growth. A recent report released by Small Business Majority finds that the 10 natural and cultural monuments protected by President Obama are responsible for \$156.4 million in annual economic benefits for local communities and that visitation to these lands drastically increases following designation with national monument visitation resulting in approximately \$58 million in labor income and supporting 1,820 jobs. Further, the study finds that this economic activity is particularly beneficial to small businesses in these predominantly rural communities. This study is in line with other studies and results seen following past national monument designations.

We ask that you listen to the overwhelming majority of Americans who support our national parks and monuments during the NPS centennial and refrain from including any language to undermine the Antiquities Act. We look forward to working with this committee on a bill that ensures that our national parks and monuments are appropriately celebrated and protected for future generations.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and thank you for your leadership on the committee.

Sincerely,