## U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPUBLICANS

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## Republicans Introduce Legislation to Secure the Border on Federal Lands Will help prevent environmental damage, crime, drug smuggling, terrorist threats

**Washington, D.C.** – Today, House National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee Ranking Member Rob Bishop (R-UT), House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Doc Hastings (R-WA), Homeland Security Committee Ranking Member Peter King (R-NY) and Judiciary Committee Ranking Member Lamar Smith (R-TX) introduced legislation (H.R. 5016) to prohibit the Department of the Interior (DOI) from using environmental regulations to hinder U.S. Border Patrol from securing our border on federal lands.

As a result of DOI's actions, these federal lands have become an unpatrolled highway that's open to criminals, drug smugglers, human traffickers and terrorists who endanger American lives and cause severe environmental damage. See attached fact sheet.

Just recently, Arizona rancher Rob Krentz was killed by a criminal who entered and exited the U.S. on federal land through the San Bernardino Wildlife Refuge. This is one of the areas that Border Patrol has been unable to effectively monitor. In 2007, Rob and his wife wrote a letter to Members of Congress expressing concern over the criminal activity that was taking place in Wilderness areas along the border, writing that "we are in fear for our lives and safety and health of ourselves and that of our families and friends."

The legislation would ensure that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Border Patrol are permitted to assert operational control over the border in order to carry out their mission as mandated by Congress. The bill would free DHS and Border Patrol from bureaucratic interferences that currently impact their ability to effectively secure the border on public lands.

"The gravity of the situation must no longer be ignored. This legislation helps ensure that DOI policies no longer enable dangerous criminals to co-opt federal border lands as their drug trafficking highways. What many fail to recognize is that allowing the USBP to apprehend and deter trains of criminal traffickers will not only remedy weaknesses in border security, but also improve the health and vitality of our protected federal lands, which have been severely damaged by years of abuse from drug and human traffickers. National Security and a healthy environment are not mutually exclusive, however with current DOI policies, neither is being accomplished." – Subcommittee Ranking Member Bishop

"Effectively securing our borders against illegal entry is a matter of homeland security."

Border Patrol agents spend every day on the front line -- securing our homeland from terrorists. Denying or limiting the Border Patrol access to public lands and allowing the flow of illegals, including potential terrorists, doesn't protect anything. It doesn't protect the public lands that the illegals carelessly cross, and it certainly doesn't protect American lives placed at risk by terrorists who seek to exploit unpatrolled areas of the border." - Ranking Member King

"It makes no sense to prevent the Border Patrol from accessing these lands in the name of some future preservation. The people – not the plants – need our protection now, today. And by stopping the drug smugglers and human traffickers from trampling the earth and terrorizing our communities, we will preserve pristine areas for future generations to enjoy." – Ranking Member Smith

"We all share the same goals of wanting to protect our environment and keep our country safe. However, Interior Department land managers are waging a turf war along the border that is making it impossible to achieve either. Today, Rep. Bishop is leading us in introducing a common sense solution that I hope will have bipartisan support." – Ranking Member Hastings

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