Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Vote "Aye" on the Lummis Amendment

End the Lockout of Border Patrol to Federal Lands

Dear Colleague,

The Lummis Amendment to the 2012 Homeland Security Appropriations bill is focused on the serious problem of our Nation's border security taking a back seat to environmental laws and the regulatory whims of Department of the Interior land managers. An October 2010 GAO report revealed that critical access by the Border Patrol to federal land is routinely blocked and frustrated by the Department of the Interior leaving vast areas open to criminal cartels.

Your constituents may not be aware that Border Patrol Agents must ask permission of Park Rangers, and other federal land managers, just to do their job to secure our southern and northern borders.

Unfortunately, federal land managers have used this authority over the Border Patrol to require payments in return for access to public land. The amendment offered by Congresswoman Lummis would strike language in the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act that authorizes and approves these payments. Additionally, the amendment would strike language in the bill that allows these funds to be used by the Interior Department to purchase even more land. Additional federal land acquisition only exacerbates the problem by limiting access to even more land and further bloating the federal estate – at a time when the government cannot even afford to provide the basic care and maintenance needed for existing national parks and other lands.

It is no coincidence that Border Patrol makes nearly 50% of their total, nationwide apprehensions in the Tucson, Arizona Sector where the land is more than 80% publicly owned. Investigations by the House Natural Resources Committee have found alarming examples of the Border Patrol being literally locked out, barricaded and frustrated from doing their jobs by land managers inhibiting necessary access to federal lands.

The House of Representatives must send a clear message that 1) National Security is our top priority, 2) the border patrol does not cause environmental damage – but the drug cartels and criminal elements that come across the border do, 3) the best way to protect the environment is to allow the Border Patrol to have the access they need to stop the flow of criminal activity that is taking such a harmful toll on the wildlife and ecology of these natural areas, and 4) if we have limited funds to appropriate for border control, that money should go to border control, not to buy additional federal land.

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We are pleased that **Chairman Aderholt, of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, supported this amendment during Floor debate last night** and we urge all our Colleagues to vote "aye" on the Lummis Amendment.

If you have any questions, please contact Casey Hammond (casey.hammond@mail.house.gov) or Jim Streeter (james.streeter@mail.house.gov) with the Natural Resources Committee at x6-7736.

Sincerely,

Rob Bishop
Chairman,
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands

Doc Hastings
Chairman,
Committee on Natural Resources

Peter King
Chairman,
Committee on Homeland Security