

DISSENTING VIEWS

We oppose H.R. 715 because it fails to protect property rights and leaves intact impediments to securing our nation's borders against criminal incursions and the environmental degradation that is now occurring along the border as a result.

This legislation will expand Saguaro National Park by 975 acres, nearly all of it private, except for one parcel owned by a county. These property owners will face new limitations on their property. Specifically, the Secretary of the Interior will have the authority to take private land if he determines the owner's use of the land is detrimental to the park. The federal government already has more land than it can adequately manage and yet this Congress keeps expanding boundaries and providing endless funding mechanisms to acquire even more. Under these circumstances, there is no reason to continue providing the National Park Service with the hammer of condemnation that it wields to create so-called "willing sellers."

At the full Committee markup, Congressman Rob Bishop offered an amendment to remove the threatening authority and provide a degree of security to property owners in line with current standards for recent park expansion bills. Unfortunately, this common sense amendment was defeated on a largely partisan vote.

Saguaro National Park used to be a crown jewel in our National Park system. Recently, however, the Fraternal Order of Police named it one of the top 10 most dangerous parks in the country, stating that Saguaro is "home to body dumping, smuggling and poaching after rangers go home at night." The National Park Service's own website alerts visitors to be on the lookout for arson, vandalism, theft of cactus, poaching, dumping of debris, marijuana cultivation and drug labs. With these growing new threats to the environment of the park along the borderlands, it is imperative that Congress re-define and balance the roles of the Interior Department and the Department of Homeland Security. It is now apparent that the undue prohibitions and restrictions being imposed on needed Border Patrol enforcement activities harm both border security and the park environment.

When arguing against an amendment offered by Congressman Rob Bishop that would have prevented the Park Service from placing restrictions on the Border Patrol from securing the park, the sponsor of H.R. 715 stated that it should be up to the individual parks to negotiate what is and isn't permissible. It is our belief that Congress, not bureaucrats, should establish our national security strategy. Unfortunately, this sound policy, border security amendment was defeated by the Majority Democrats on a party-line vote.

We are also concerned with the cost of the legislation. The National Park Service has a well-publicized backlog estimated at

nearly \$9 billion, and this expansion could cost as much as \$30 million. When will this Democrat Majority show restraint and take care of the neglected land we already have?

Despite the refusal to accept Republican amendments in committee that would have corrected these issues, we are hopeful that careful analysis of these shortcomings on the Floor of the House of Representatives, under an open rule, will allow us to pass these amendments with strong bipartisan support.

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