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Committee Passes Bill to Increase Border Security on Federal Lands

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House Committee on Natural Resources passed [H.R. 1505](#), the *National Security and Federal Lands Protection Act*, with a vote of 26 to 17 to secure the border on federal lands. The bill prohibits the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) from using environmental regulations to hinder U.S. Border Patrol from securing our border on federal lands.

“H.R. 1505 is a common sense solution that addresses one of the prevailing issues preventing us from gaining full operational control of the border - the U.S. Border Patrol’s lack of sufficient access to millions of acres of federally owned land. We are now one step closer to ensuring that Border Patrol has the necessary access to deter and apprehend dangerous criminals that have long used our federal lands for safe passage into the United States. I look forward to working with my colleagues as this bill is considered further and ultimately brought to the floor of the House for a final vote,” **said National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee Chairman Rob Bishop (UT-01).**

“A majority of our Committee has voted to prioritize national security over bureaucratic red tape,” **said Chairman Hastings.** *“Border Patrol has become encumbered with layers of environmental regulations and procedural hurdles that inhibit them from being able to do their job efficiently and effectively. As a result, our public lands are specifically targeted by criminals, drug smugglers and human traffickers who damage the environment and endanger American lives. This committee will not ignore the tragic consequences and exploitation that is occurring due to the porous border on federal land. H.R. 1505 ensures that Border Patrol can do their job by creating an effective deterrent to the smugglers and criminals that have thought nothing of destroying our public lands.”*

National Security and Federal Lands Protection Act:

- Prohibits the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture from impeding, prohibiting or restricting the work of the Border Patrol on public lands within 100 miles of the U.S. border with Mexico and Canada.
- Allows Border Patrol agents access to federal lands for the following activities: maintain and construct patrol roads; construct fences; use vehicles to patrol, install,

set up and maintain surveillance equipment and sensors; use aircraft; and deploy temporary tactical infrastructure, including forward operating bases.

- Extends the same environmental waiver authority found in the Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 exercised by DHS Secretary Chertoff in 2008 to construct U.S.-Mexico border fence. Through that authority, it prevents environmental regulations and lawsuits from impeding U.S. Customs and Border Patrol's ability to prevent unlawful entries into the United States.
- Sunsets after five-years from the date it is enacted in order to allow Congress the opportunity to evaluate its effectiveness.

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