

Dean Heller
United States Senator from Nevada
324 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

6/15/2018

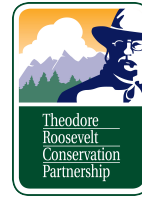
To the Honorable Senator Dean Heller:

As representatives from organizations representing over 10,000 Nevadans, we are deeply concerned with your expressed support for a rider in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), concerning the greater sage-grouse. This unnecessary provision is wholly unrelated to our national defense, and would undermine years of collaboration between western governors, ranchers, sportsmen, conservationists, and other stakeholders to conserve the sage-grouse and its habitat.

While the rider's author claims that sage-grouse conservation impacts our military operations and readiness, this is simply not true. There is no evidence that military operations have ever been compromised by federal planning efforts focused on the sage-grouse. This has been supported in letters released by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense Readiness, Army, Navy, and Air Force on the sage-grouse plans that clearly state the plans do not impede on our nation's military operations, training, or readiness.

If this rider is attached to the NDAA it would have negative impacts for Nevada and stakeholders in the state. The rider would enact a ten year ban on listing the sage-grouse under the Endangered Species Act, which would eliminate a key incentive to fully fund and implement the federal and state sage-grouse conservation plans. This rider would discourage the full and faithful implementation of federal and state conservation plans, thus increasing the likelihood that Greater sage-grouse would be listed following the ten-year ban, an outcome we hope to avoid.

Additionally, including this rider in the NDAA would set a dangerous precedent for including ideological and non-germane riders within this must-pass national security legislation. Presiding leadership of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee has long succeeded in keeping the NDAA largely free of unrelated, ideological policy riders. In recent years, Senator John McCain – the current Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee – has taken a clear stand against including these types of provisions in the Defense bill. For example, in December 2016 Senator McCain stated in reference to the sage-grouse rider, *"It has nothing to do with defense, because the law is no Endangered Species Act can interfere with the operations and trainings at*



military bases. So it had no connection to NDAA.” (“GOP Politicians Won’t Keep The Sage Grouse From Listing,” Wyoming Public Media December 2, 2016).

Instead of supporting this rider, we invite you to join us and work to ensure our armed forces remain safe and well-trained through a clean NDAA bill and Nevada’s public lands are kept an open and working landscape to be enjoyed by hunters, anglers, businesses, and outdoor recreation enthusiasts. We strongly encourage you to honor the deal that was made for the sage-grouse in 2015 and let the on-the-ground conservation work continue.

We request that you oppose including the extraneous sage-grouse rider in the National Defense Authorization Act, support the 2015 plans that were collaboratively developed, and join us in ensuring the hard work being done on the ground to conserve the Greater sage-grouse in Nevada continues.

Sincerely,

Chris Cefalu
Nevada Bighorns Unlimited

Carl Erquiaga, Nevada Field Representative
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Robert Gaudet, President
Nevada Wildlife Federation

Land Tawney, President & CEO,
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Aaron Kindle, Senior Manager, Western Sportsmen
National Wildlife Federation