

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman McCain and Ranking Member Reed,

On behalf of the undersigned hunting, fishing, conservation, natural resource professional, outdoor-industry and landowner organizations, we would like to express our opposition to the inclusion of any language in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that seeks to legislate wildlife management or otherwise delay, defund, or undo conservation efforts for wildlife such as the greater sage grouse and lesser prairie chickens.

Legislating wildlife management through the defense authorization sets a bad precedent and unnecessarily shifts attention away from the purpose of the NDAA – national security. Language in the current House NDAA bill calling for a 10-year delay for listing multiple species under the Endangered Species Act is detrimental to on-the-ground and established wildlife conservation efforts and is non-germane. Both the lesser prairie chicken and sage grouse currently are not listed under the Endangered Species Act, but implementation of conservation and mitigation measures are critical moving forward. Any delay would remove the urgent incentive for conservation for these game birds and other species and would ultimately lead to a worsened scenario for these species on-the-ground. Finally, this language threatens unprecedented cooperation of Western states, sportsmen, ranchers, and many others in conserving these state-regulated game birds, and – importantly – threatens bi-partisan support for legislation that should be focused on our national security, defense, and military members and their families.

More is at stake than just sage grouse or prairie chickens. The sagebrush ecosystem, for example, is home to more than 350 different species of plants and animals, including such iconic species as mule deer, pronghorn, and elk. These western landscapes also contain watersheds that support important cold and warm water fisheries and recreational opportunities important to American sportsmen and women. If we can continue to successfully conserve species like sage grouse and prairie chickens, we will help other species and prevent a cascade of future listings that could seriously impact the Western economy.

Our groups see no need for Congress to take action on sage grouse, lesser prairie chickens or other species beyond ensuring adequate annual funding for implementation of conservation plans by the federal agencies and the states. Anything else would just be impeding historic collaborative progress for important American landscapes. Please keep this language out of the final Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.

Sincerely,

American Fly Fishing Trade Association
American Woodcock Society
Archery Trade Association
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
California Waterfowl
Fly Fishers International
Izaak Walton League of America
National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
National Deer Alliance
National Wildlife Federation
North American Falconers Association
North American Grouse Partnership
Pheasants Forever
Quail Forever
Quality Deer Management Association
Pope and Young Club
Ruffed Grouse Society
Snook and Gamefish Foundation
The Nature Conservancy
The Wildlife Society
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Trout Unlimited
Western Landowners Alliance
Wildlife Management Institute