

Statement by Sen. Orrin G. Hatch  
Before the  
House Committee on Natural Resource  
Subcommittee on Parks, Forests and Public Lands

November 3, 2011

H.R. 3155, Northern Arizona Mining Continuity Act of 2011

Chairman Bishop, ranking member Grijalva, and members of this important committee, I thank you for the opportunity to share a few remarks on H.R. 3155, the Northern Arizona Mining Continuity Act of 2011, introduced by Congressman Trent Franks, of Arizona. I have cosponsored a companion bill in the Senate, S. 1690, with Senator John McCain of Arizona.

I would like to recognize Supervisor Buster Johnson of Mohave County, Arizona, who will testify here today. Supervisor Johnson represents the unanimous views of the county commissioners from southern Utah who also strongly support this legislation.

H.R. 3155 would have an impact on the Arizona Strip region, which sits directly south of the Utah/Arizona border, and which is very important socially and economically to the communities and businesses in southern Utah. In short, economic activity in the Arizona Strip usually mean jobs for southern Utahns.

Mr. Chairman, the Northern Arizona Mining Continuity Act is simply an effort to restore an agreement that was forged leading up to the passage of the Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984. There will be some who may attempt a logical dance to show that the Act did not, in fact, guarantee the right for future uranium mining in this area. And I can agree that no one involved in those negotiations believed any guarantees were established.

But those of us who were negotiating the terms of the Arizona Wilderness Act have a clear understanding of the process that allowed it to become law. I submit for the record a letter sent by me and former Senator Dennis DeConcini dated June 5, 2009, to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. As you know, Mr. Chairman, Senator DeConcini was the Democratic Senator from Arizona at the time that the Arizona Wilderness Act was negotiated.

Let me read a portion of that letter signed by Senator DeConcini:

*“This carefully crafted compromise provided new Wilderness designations to ensure that the Grand Canyon watershed was fully protected and allowed mining and grazing to continue in the remaining areas of the region. The agreement led to the passing of the Arizona Wilderness Act by large majorities in both the House and Senate.”*

And the letter further states:

*“We believe strongly that the recent calls for a withdrawal of the area and last year’s questionable House Natural Resources Committee Emergency Resolution violate the spirit of that 1983/84 agreement.”*

**(Mr. Chairman, I ask that a copy of this letter be made part of the record along with my statement.)**

**Mr. Chairman, it is true that no party to those negotiations believed that the agreement trumped environmental laws or protections for the Grand Canyon, but Secretary Salazar's proposed withdrawal of these uranium resources is not about threats to the environment or to the Grand Canyon. Careful environmental studies by the Bureau of Land Management and by the Arizona Geological Survey make it clear that uranium mining in this area pose no real threat to the environment, to water quality, or to the Grand Canyon. In fact, the August 2010 Mineral Report by the BLM recognized that withdrawing these resources would have far reaching economic implications for the region.**

**I've heard some complain that different proponents of this legislation claim different numbers of job losses related to the Secretary's withdrawal. That is the result of different assumptions of how much mining activity would take place. However, there is no question that this withdrawal will lead to a loss of future jobs and economic activity in this depressed region of the country. The Secretary is withdrawing these lands, because he believes that mining activity would be pursued on them.**

**The proposed withdrawal of this area from mining would be the Interior Department's latest move to stifle jobs in rural America. It is an unfortunate and dangerous trend that the Obama Administration continues to aggressively shut down domestic energy production.**

**I cannot remember a time that our nation had a greater need than right now for the high paying jobs, the hefty oil and mineral royalties that would be generated for the federal treasury, or the enhanced energy security that would come from greater domestic energy production.**

**President Obama has too often steered our nation in the wrong direction with regard to domestic energy jobs and energy security. This legislation will help to correct that course in relation to domestic uranium reserves. As you know, Mr. Chairman, the United States is more than 80 percent dependent on foreign nations for our uranium needs. The legislation before this committee would increase jobs, boost federal royalties, and increase our domestic energy security.**

**Once, again, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for holding this hearing, today, and I hope this committee will give favorable consideration to H.R. 3155, the Northern Arizona Mining Continuity Act. Thank you.**