



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

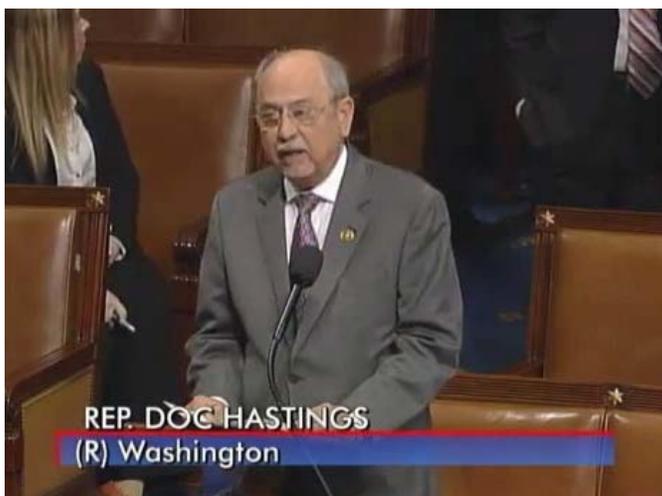
Chairman Doc Hastings

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Chairman Hastings: Major Land-Use Decisions Should Not Be Made Behind Closed Doors

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) delivered the following statement on the House floor today in support of H.R. 1459, *the Ensuring Public Involvement in the Creation of National Monuments Act*.



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“Mr. Chairman, President Obama has not been shy about his willingness or desire to circumvent Congress and take unilateral action on a variety of issues; this includes the designation of new national monuments.

In fact, during the President’s first-term in office an internal memo was leaked that showed plans to potentially lock-up more than 13 million acres of Western land with the simple stroke of the President’s pen.

Major land-use decisions such as this should not be made behind closed doors and instead should fully involve the local citizens whose livelihoods will be directly affected.

That’s why I strongly support H.R. 1459, the Ensuring Public Involvement in the Creation of National Monuments Act, sponsored by Public Lands and Environmental Regulation Subcommittee Chairman Rob Bishop. This legislation would require public participation before a president can designate a national monument under the Antiquities Act.

Over a hundred years ago, the Antiquities Act was passed to allow a president to

unilaterally designate national monuments without any input or involvement from the people, communities, or elected officials of the areas that would be directly impacted.

However, this authority is intended to be used, under narrow circumstances and in emergencies to prevent destruction of a precious place. But unfortunately, we have seen this power abused by presidents of both parties. It's been used a tool to score political points, rather than to protect areas facing imminent threat or harm.

National monuments are one of the most restrictive land-use designations. They can significantly block public access and limit public recreation and other job-creating economic activities. The American people and their elected leaders deserve to have a say in which of our lands deserve special protections as national monuments and which should, instead, be allowed to contribute to the full range of recreational, conservation, economic, and resource benefits that carefully managed multiple-use lands provide.

H.R. 1459 would guarantee public involvement and ensure that the designation process is transparent by requiring all national monument designations made under the Antiquities Act to complete the NEPA process. Most, if not all, major public land-use decisions are statutorily required to go through the NEPA process. Designations made by the president should be treated no differently.

I will openly state that I, and many of my Republican colleagues, believe that NEPA is a law that should be streamlined and updated. However, this bill is about transparency and ensuring that the public has a voice. If my Democrat colleagues believe that NEPA is worthwhile law that works and is important, why would they oppose making sure that presidential designations go through the same process?

This bill continues to uphold the original intention of the Antiquities Act, which is to allow the president to act in emergency situations. It protects the president's ability to act if there is an imminent threat to an American antiquity by allowing for a temporary "emergency" designation of 5,000 acres or less for a three year period. After that time, in order to ensure public participation in the process, the designation would be made permanent if the NEPA process is completed or it is approved by Congress.

The bill would also limit national monument declarations to no more than one per state during any four-year presidential term, and prevent the inclusion of private property in monument designations without the prior written consent of the property owners.

National Monument designations deserve public input from the people and communities who are directly impacted. This bill is necessary to stop unilateral actions by the president and ensure participation by the American people.

I commend Subcommittee Chairman Bishop for his work on this bill and encourage my colleagues to support it.

I reserve the balance of my time."

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