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## **Bill Allows Interior Dept. to Divert Money Away from Border Patrol to Buy Up Private Land**

*Democrats attach "extortion" provision to Troop Funding Bill*

**WASHINGTON D.C.** – Today, the House of Representatives will vote on the FY 2010 Supplemental Appropriations bill that contains a provision allowing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to transfer an unlimited amount of funds to the Department of the Interior (DOI) in the form of environmental mitigation payments demanded in return for allowing the U.S. Border Patrol to simply do its job to secure the border on federal lands. The supplemental bill is to provide money for American troops fighting overseas. The border security fund diversion provision would expressly permit DOI to use the transferred funds to buy millions of dollars of private land.

The Democrat-controlled Rules Committee blocked an amendment to strike this provision from being debated and voted on by the full House. The amendment was offered by National Parks, Forests and Public Lands Subcommittee Ranking Member Rob Bishop (UT-01) and Full Committee Ranking Member Doc Hastings (WA-04).

*"Americans should be outraged to know that not only is DOI blocking Border Patrol's efforts to secure the border, but it is actually charging DHS millions of dollars just to conduct border patrol operations on its land. This is called extortion," said Congressman Bishop. "The bill gives permanent authority for DOI to extort money from DHS with no dollar amount limits written into law. The money can then be used to buy up more private land along the border and make our security problem even worse. We have a crisis situation on our southern border where drug smugglers, human traffickers and other criminals have taken advantage of the security gaps on our public lands. It makes no sense that instead of responding to this crisis, Congress would give its blessing to the diversion of millions of dollars away from our Homeland Security efforts."*

*"Park Rangers should not be dictating our nation's border security policies and Congress should not be giving carte blanche authority to the Interior Department to divert security funds away from the Border Patrol," said Ranking Member Hastings. "Democrats should never have attached such a rewrite of the law on a bill to provide vital funding to American troops fighting overseas."*

### **Background**

Environmental regulations, enforced by DOI and U.S. Forest Service land managers, are

preventing DHS and Border Patrol from effectively securing our nation's borders on federal lands. For example, DOI, citing the 1964 Wilderness Act, has blocked Border Patrol from siting and building electronic surveillance infrastructure in Wilderness areas.

[DHS has paid DOI](#) over \$9 million since 2007 to mitigate the purported "environmental damage" of protecting our border. Per a Memorandum of Agreement signed in 2009, DHS agreed to hand over an additional \$50 million for mitigation funds to DOI.

In an [October 2009 letter](#), Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano writes that allowing Border Patrol to monitor these areas helps mitigate against environmental damage:

*"Overall, the removal of cross-border violators from public lands is a value to the environment as well as to the mission of the land managers. The USBP believes that operations are generally functionally equivalent to mitigation. Recognition of this equivalency could prevent what we see as unnecessary and potentially very large mitigation requirements."*

House Republicans, led by Congressman Bishop, have introduced legislation ([H.R. 5016](#)) that would give U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) operational control of the border and ensure that the U.S. Department of Interior does not impede or restrict Border Patrol from effectively doing its job to secure the border.

For more information visit [www.republicans.resourcescommittee.house.gov/border](http://www.republicans.resourcescommittee.house.gov/border)

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