

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 5, 2014

COMMITTEES:
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to you to respectfully express my concern with the enclosed request from a member of the Nevada Congressional Delegation encouraging you to use your authority under the American Antiquities Act of 1906 to designate the Gold Butte area of Southern Nevada as a National Monument. As a Senator from Nevada who represents the affected area, unlike my colleague who placed this request, I am extremely concerned about the impact a unilateral designation will have on my state. I am writing to you to express my strong opposition to the use of the Antiquities Act authority in my state, and to underscore the importance of a grassroots-driven, public, and transparent Congressionally-approved process for public lands designations.

Gold Butte is a natural treasure and a draw for tourism in southern Nevada. While nearly everyone agrees that conservation measures in the area are important so future generations can camp, hike, hunt, and enjoy the cultural resources there, there are strong differences of opinion among my constituents on the policies that can accomplish that goal. When it comes to public lands legislation, I believe local opinion and buy-in within the community is extremely important. At this point, there is significant opposition to the current legislative proposal before the 113th Congress, but the concerns of those opposed ought to be resolved via the Congressional legislative process. The use of your authority under the Antiquities Act would not serve the area well and would escalate anger and frustrations with the Department of the Interior government in a region of our state where tensions are already presently high.

Moreover, the Nevada Delegation has a strong tradition of working in a bipartisan matter to resolve issues pertaining to the management of our public lands and of advancing legislation that protects our environmentally sensitive areas while facilitating sustainable economic development in our communities. As you may know, over 85 percent of the lands within our state are administered by the federal government. As a result, our Congressional Delegation is frequently approached by local elected officials, stakeholders, and other impacted individuals that we represent and are asked to work with them to develop legislation to improve public land management.

In this Congress alone, our delegation has introduced over ten Nevada-specific public lands bills that have the support of the bipartisan members that represent the affected areas. In each case,

the details of those proposals were hashed out in an open and transparent process. Accordingly, they all have garnered near unanimous support within the affected communities.

These proposals include *the Lyon County Economic Development and Conservation Act of 2013 (S.159)*, *the Las Vegas Valley Public Land and Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument Act of 2013 (S.974)*, and *the Pine Forest Range Recreation Enhancement Act of 2013 (S.342)*. It is important to note that both the Senate and House of Representatives have both taken varying levels of legislative action on these conservation bills, and I am optimistic they will be sent to your desk for signature before the end of this Congress.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to abandon any proposal you are considering to make a land designation under the Antiquities Act in the State of Nevada. New land designations ought to be considered in the open and public Congressional process so all parties, including those who support and oppose the measure, have an equal opportunity to voice their concerns. I strongly believe that if any action is taken on this matter it should be by Congress reflecting the will of the affected local community. I have always approached public lands issues in that manner while in Congress, and remain committed to advancing public lands legislation across my state via that important process.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this important request. Please do not hesitate to contact my office with questions.

Sincerely,



Dean Heller
United States Senator

cc:

Secretary of the Interior, Sally Jewell
Senator Harry Reid
Representative Dina Titus
Representative Mark Amodei
Representative Joe Heck
Representative Steven Horsford