

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

July 17, 2018

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
Russell Senate Building, Room 228
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
Office of the Democratic Leader
The Capitol, H-204
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House of Representatives
Office of the Majority Leader
The Capitol, H-107
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senate
Office of the Minority Leader
The Capitol, S-221
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
Office of the Majority Leader
The Capitol, S-230
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As the House-Senate conference committee finalizes the conference report on the National Defense Authorization Act for 2019, we write to urge you to reject provisions which would have widespread, negative consequences for the conservation of our imperiled wildlife and public lands.

The 2019 Defense Authorization bills contain numerous, controversial, anti-environmental provisions that are unrelated to military readiness. These deceptive provisions would cause irreparable harm to our wildlife and public lands.

Provisions included in the House bill would undermine the science-based decision-making process used to protect all wildlife, plants, and fish in danger of extinction under the Endangered

Species Act (ESA) by prohibiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from listing the greater sage-grouse and the lesser prairie chicken, even if these species are in need of federal protection to avoid extinction, for at least ten years, and immediately and permanently delisting—legislatively—the American burying beetle which is currently protected under the ESA. These are attacks not only on the individual species but on the ESA itself and are out of step with the American public.

A 2015 national poll found that ninety percent of American voters support this critical law. Decisions about how to protect species under the ESA should be based on science and made by the experts at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, not Congress. The legislation would also prevent members of the public from challenging these decisions in court, undermining a core value of our democracy.

An additional provision would undermine the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and would require the Department of Defense to obtain authorizations from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) every ten years—instead of the current five-year requirement—for activities that can harm marine mammals. Congress included this 5-year authorization requirement in the MMPA to ensure that military activities that can harm marine mammals—most notably the Navy’s use of sonar and underwater explosives—do not deplete marine mammal populations. These five-year reviews are important because NMFS works with the military, most often the Department of the Navy, to determine and establish scientifically appropriate mitigation measures based on the most up-to-date science to achieve the “least practicable adverse impact” on the affected species.

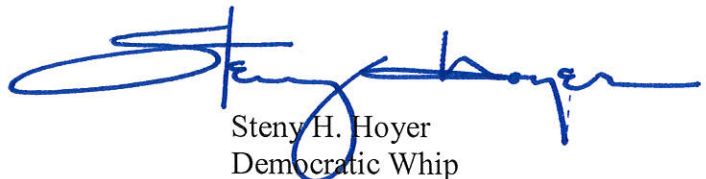
The law requires periodic reviews because marine mammals are difficult to monitor in the wild, the most current research and population counts can change frequently, and impacts from Navy activities can be significant. During its most recent round of environmental reviews, the Navy estimated that over five years it would kill more than 250 whales and other marine mammals, cause permanent injury to another 3,000, and disrupt foraging and other vital behaviors more than 30 million times.

Again, we urge you to stand up for laws that conserve our natural heritage for future generations by removing these attacks on wildlife from the final conference report for the NDAA. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



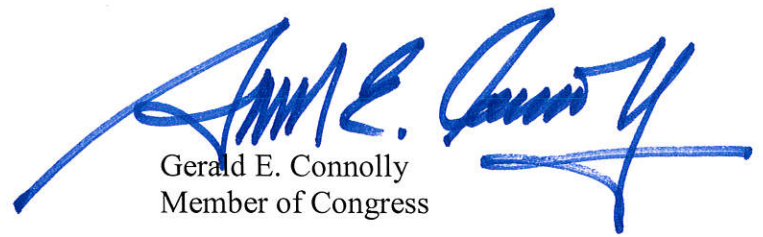
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Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources



Steny H. Hoyer
Democratic Whip



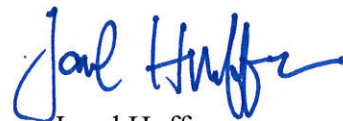
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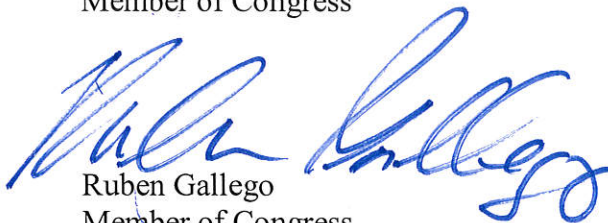
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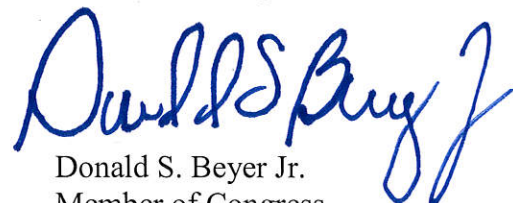
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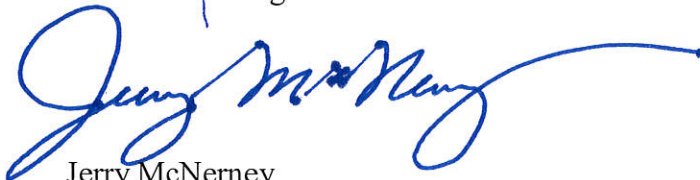
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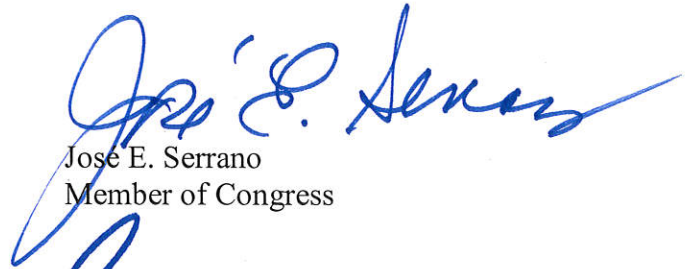
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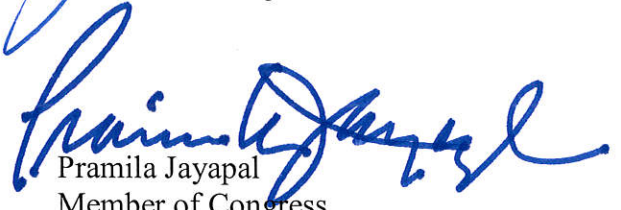
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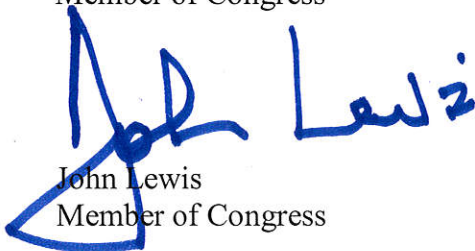
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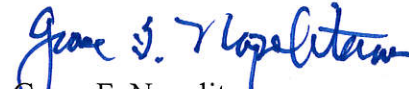
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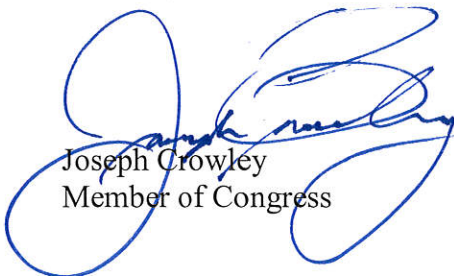
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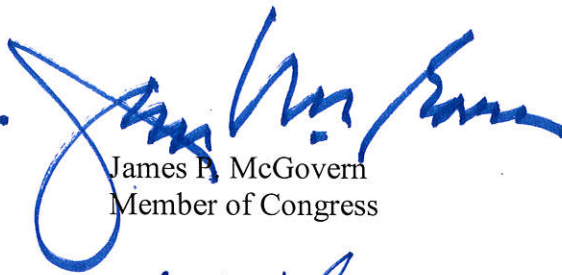

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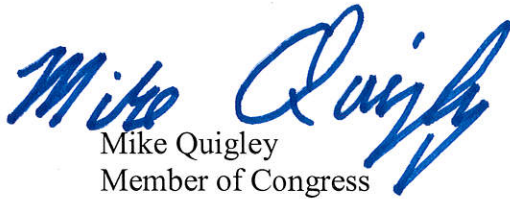

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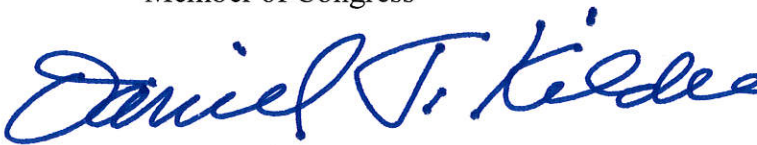
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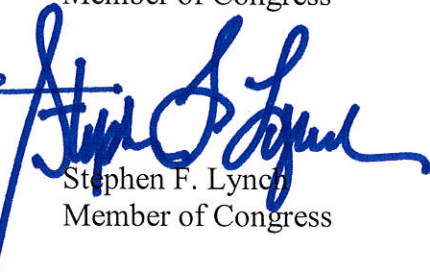
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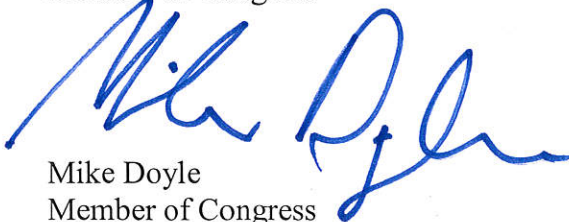
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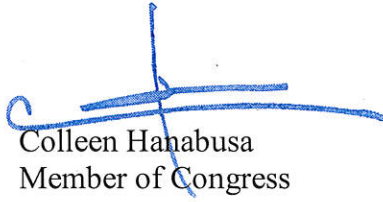
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