

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva**  
**Full Committee Hearing on Endangered Species Act Bills**  
**July 19, 2017**

The Endangered Species Act works.

Despite years of Republican efforts to pass bills weakening the Act and cut funding for agencies that protect and recover imperiled American wildlife, 99 percent of listed species have continued to survive, and 90 percent are on schedule to meet their recovery goals.

And despite an ongoing misinformation campaign by Republicans designed to turn the public against the ESA, 90 percent of American voters support keeping the law intact.

These facts are not up for debate, no matter how strongly opponents of the law believe that polluters and land developers shouldn't have to watch out for wildlife.

Deep down, Republicans know this.

So instead of a full frontal assault, the advocates for extinction talk about the need to “reform” or “modernize” the Act. These transparent attacks on one of the most successful and popular conservation statutes in the history of the world are old, tired, and not fooling anyone.

The Majority has served up a weird menu of bills before us today, some of which have been warmed over from the last time we went through this pointless exercise in 2014. Three years later, it looks even less appealing, and represents only a small sample of the 200-plus legislative proposals to weaken the ESA that have been floated since Republicans took control of the House in 2011.

I cannot say this strongly, loudly, or frequently enough: the ESA does not need congressional meddling to work better. What it needs is congressional support.

The Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service have provided us with more than 40 years of evidence that the law gives states, localities, landowners, and private interests an incredible amount of flexibility to proceed with development projects in ways that conserve fish, wildlife, plants and the landscapes they need to survive. These agencies simply need us to provide adequate funding for them to do their jobs, and then get out of the way.

Claims that complying with the ESA kills jobs or impedes economic growth are simply not grounded in reality. The U.S. economy has more than tripled since the law was passed: from \$5 trillion in 1973 to \$16 trillion today.

Yes, we should put the brakes on projects that would wipe unique forms of life off the face of the Earth. We have a moral duty to preserve for future generations the ability to discover how

species can benefit them. Will the cure for cancer come from nature? What about the roadmap to a new revolution in agriculture or energy? We will never know if we choose to squander biodiversity instead of protecting it.

For Members of this 115<sup>th</sup> Congress to declare that we should get to decide which species live or die -- for all time -- is arrogant and shameful.

The flaws with the bills before us today are self-evident: basing conservation decisions on politics instead of science; limiting access to the courts; making it easier for bad guys to poach and traffic elephants, lions, and rhinos just so the mega-rich can shoot them without having to actually travel to Africa.

These bills are an embarrassment and a waste of time.

Regardless of what their sponsors say, the goal of each of these bills is to weaken the ESA, not to make it "work better."

Enacting these bills into law would drive the extinction of fish, wildlife, and plants in America and around the globe, and they must be defeated.