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**Western Senators Introduce Defense Authorization Amendment To Protect Training Assets****(Washington, DC)**– Today, Senators Dean Heller (R-NV), Mike Lee (R-UT), Steve Daines (R-MT), James Inhofe (R-OK), James Lankford (R-OK), Jerry Moran (R-KS), James Risch (R-ID), Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Mike Crapo (R-ID) introduced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would protect the ability of the Army, Navy, and Air Force to utilize their training ranges in western states, while also empowering those same states to better manage their wildlife. “In Nevada, where mining, ranching, energy production, and outdoor recreation all serve as a central component of our local economy, the Administration’s overly restrictive sage grouse management plans would be devastating,” **said Senator Heller**. “Allowing our state to implement its proactive plan aimed at reducing threats, like wildfire and invasive species, to key habitats, is a better path forward. No doubt, with a chance to prove success at the state level, I’m confident Nevada and the other ten western states can support sustainable sage-grouse populations while at the same time maintain our western way of life.”  “All three branches of our nation’s armed services have told us that a listing of the Greater Sage-Grouse would negatively impact their training, readiness, operations, and costs,” **Senator Lee said**. “Western states have a well-established and exemplarily record of implementing their own sage-grouse conversation plans and there is zero need for other federal agencies to get involved. “The listing of the Greater Sage-Grouse and the Obama administration’s land-use plans will have a detrimental impact on Montana’s economy, our land users and our military’s access to critical training ranges," **said Senator Daines**. "Western states know best how to balance the management of our natural resources and wildlife with our recreational and local economic needs. States should be empowered to implement their own plans, not forced to abide by another burdensome, out-of-touch federal policy.""The Endangered Species Act has forced communities to comply with expensive red tape in order protect insects and animals deemed threatened or endangered, yet the success rate of species being delisted is a meager 2 percent," **said Sen. Inhofe**, Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. "The American Burying Beetle was listed in 1989, and its known population has skyrocketed but it remains on the lists, leaving those in its range to work around the habitat of this thriving beetle. Oklahoma will also successfully conserve the Lesser Prairie Chicken, and its recent listing was unnecessary and politically driven. The range for each of these species include Oklahoma military installations, and the last thing our military needs at a time of constrained budgets is to designate resources to comply with excessive regulations.”“We should be good stewards of our land and animals, but the Endangered Species Act listing of the American burying beetle and lesser prairie chicken in Oklahoma simply go too far,” **said Senator Lankford**. “This type of extremism unnecessarily burdens some of our national defense installations, as well as agricultural and private economic activity. This amendment is needed to help the military maintain their resources and give Oklahoma more time to enact their conservation activities.”"In 2011, then-Secretary Salazar invited states to prepare conservation plans in order to recover and conserve the Greater Sage-Grouse. Since then, our state has devoted enormous resources to develop a sustainable, long-term plan to preserve the species," **said Senator Hatch**. "Unfortunately, the Department of the Interior has since scrapped that idea and replaced it with a heavy-handed, top-down approach that is focused more on restricting economic development on millions of acres of public land and less on conserving the Grouse.  Utah deserves the opportunity to protect this bird in a balanced manner that takes into consideration the needs of the public as well as the species. This amendment empowers our state to do just that, and I strongly support its passage." The amendment would delay listing the Greater Sage Grouse so states can implement conservation plans to ensure our military readiness and the survival of the bird. It would also delay listing the Lesser Prairie Chicken for a period of at least five years.###http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_fb.png http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_tw.png http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_yt.png |