Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 10, 2009

Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

At an October 1, 2009 hearing of the House National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Subcommittee, Congress had the opportunity to hear testimony on the bill, H.R. 1925, "America's Red Rock Wilderness Act." Nearly all of what we heard was constructive dialogue coming from both sides of this debate. Most of the debate focused on how to protect these wild lands, as opposed to whether these lands deserved protection. This is a very positive development and we hope to work with you and others to take advantage of this opportunity to protect some of our nation's pristine wild and public lands.

As was made clear in this hearing, there are multiple paths to protecting these public lands, including more geographically focused alternatives. While we continue to support a statewide solution, we are also open to some of these different approaches. As we work in Congress on determining how to protect the wild public lands identified in H.R. 1925, we request that you utilize the considerable authorities granted to you under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and other statues to administratively protect the wilderness characteristics of the lands contained in the Red Rock legislation until Congress acts to protect them statutorily.

This would mean, first and foremost, renouncing the so-called "Norton settlement agreement" with the State of Utah that bars the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) from identifying and protecting BLM lands possessing wilderness characteristics as wilderness study areas, and directing the BLM to abide by previous policies directing the BLM to so-designate suitable areas. In particular, BLM should reconsider the decision not to designate and protect Wilderness Study Areas in the six recently completed resource management plans governing BLM lands in Utah. Designation of wilderness study areas is a crucial means of interim protection that enjoys the recognition of agency professionals and the laws under which they operate, such as the Federal Onshore Oil & Gas Leasing Act and the National Landscape Conservation System Act.

We also urge you to protect these lands by:

- Completing a thorough wilderness inventory of lands proposed for protection;
- Barring oil and gas leasing and development on the lands that would be designated as wilderness in the Red Rock bill;
- Segregating and withdrawing these lands from mining claim location; and

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- Prohibiting uses on these lands that would be incompatible with wilderness protection, such as off-road vehicle use, logging, road construction, etc.

As Congress debates the best means of preserving Utah's unprotected wilderness, these lands remain at risk. We respectfully request that you exercise the considerable authority granted to the Secretary of the Interior under existing laws to protect the wilderness qualities of these lands until Congress sees to their protection.

Sincerely,

Bill Delahunt

Wm. Lacy Clay

Barbara Lee

Tammy Baldwin

Jerrold Nadler

Carolyn B. Maloney

Corrine Brown

Alcee L. Hastings

Steven R. Rothman

Donald M. Payne

Richard E. Neal

George Miller

Henry A. Waxman

José E. Serrano

Elijah E. Cummings

John F. Tierney

Jim Moran

Gary L. Ackerman

Barney Frank

Lynn Woolsey

Carolyn C. Kilpatrick

Luis V. Gutierrez

David Price

Edward J. Markey

Steve Israel

[illegible]

Lynn Brichalter

John Conyers Jr.

Bobby S. [illegible]

Howard L. Berman

Danny K. Davis

Sam Farr

Gerald E. Connolly

Michael Mosonda

Jim Langevin

Paul S. Tonko

Zoe Lofgren

Jackie Speier

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Frank Pallone Jr.

Lloyd Doggett

Pete Stark

Jerry Nadler

John Lewis

Shelley Berkley

Phil Hare

Brian Higgins

Jim McGovern

John W. Olver

Jared Polis

Lois Capps

Bob Filner

Keith Ellison

Hank Johnson

Tim Ryan

Eric Paul

Rush Holt

John Hall

Joe Sestak

Emanuel Cleaver

Gwen Moore

Carol Shea-Porter

Rick Larsen

Raúl M. Grijalva

Mazie K. Hirono

Niki Tsongas

Betty Sutton

Tim J. Walz

Judy Biggert

Jim McDermott

Sander Levin

Mike Quigley

Michael E. Capuano

Grace F. Napolitano

Betty McCollum

David Loebsack