



June 3, 2011

Honorable Jeff Bingaman
United States Senate
505 South Main Street
Las Cruces, NM 88001

Dear Senator Bingaman:

The membership of the National Association of Former Border Patrol Officers (NAFBPO) wishes to express its gratitude to you for your long and honorable service on behalf of our country. You have demonstrated a spirit of patriotism and dedication which ought to be an example for other citizens to attempt to emulate.

Before your final term ends and you leave the U.S. Senate, we feel we must bring to your attention certain definite problems we see regarding the newly reintroduced "Wilderness Bill" (S. 1024), more properly titled "Organ Mountains - Dona Ana County Conservation and Protection Act". Please understand that NAFBPO is an organization literally embodying a unique collective expertise and experience based on hundreds of years about border issues and found nowhere else in our country. It is this special professional background that brings us to state and to call your attention that S.1024, as written, would be a serious detriment to the U.S. Border Patrol in its mission to detect and prevent the illegal entry of aliens across our borders.

Please note that whereas Section 287(a)(3) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (Title 8, United States Code, 1357) specifically authorizes Border Patrol Agents to enter upon private lands, but not dwellings, within 25 miles of the international border in order to carry out their assigned functions. The new S.1024, because of the designation of the southern Potrillo Mountain area as "wilderness", would reduce the Border Patrol's ability to protect our border's integrity to a restrictive five mile zone of the border with Mexico in southern Dona Ana County.

**National Association of
Former Border Patrol Officers**
P.O. Box 2012
Brunswick, GA 31521-2012
www.nafbpo.org

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***Our paramount mission is to contribute to the security and stability of the United States.
To that end, we shall propose and be advocates for immigration laws and policies that we believe serve
those national interests, and we will oppose those that do not.***

A critical international issue about land areas recently arose during a debate about Israel's borders of the 1960's. The Prime Minister of that country publicly labeled their country's nine mile width in that area as "indefensible". Likewise, in this age when professional drug and people smugglers enjoy the uses of instant portable oral and visual communication and detection devices, restricting the U.S. Border Patrol to only a five mile buffer zone from the border would constitute a grave error, one which could possibly result in irreparable harm to our nation.

All of us enjoy and benefit from nature's wondrous gifts and hope for their preservation. But we must emphasize that formally designating a crucial strip of our nation's border as "wilderness", without absolute and overriding need to do so, does nothing but favor those who would use that area for their own criminal purposes and for potential serious damage to our national security. We therefore maintain that S.1024 is seriously in need of amendment and that it must be rewritten so that it specifically provides for unfettered, unrestricted access by Border Patrol Agents, by any means, within an area of twenty five miles from the border with Mexico.

On behalf of the membership and Board of Directors of the National Association of Former Border Patrol Officers.

Sincerely,

David J. Stoddard
Chairman

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