

Chairman of Land Use Group Testifies Before Congress

The Chairman of People for Preserving our Western Heritage (PFPOWH) testified October 8th before a Congressional Committee in Washington D.C. regarding a bill that would lock-up vast tracks of land in Dona Ana County, New Mexico.

Jerry Schickedanz told Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), who chairs the full Committee, that his organization wants the committee to hold official field hearings in Dona Ana County where the issue impacts hundreds of thousands of people and the future of the county. “Senator your legislation will have a major impact on over 200,000 citizens and 560 square miles of our county. We strongly suggest that this committee hold a hearing where the land and the people exist so that all interests and issues can be fully aired and discussed by the folks most affected,” Schickedanz said.

The former NMSU Dean of Agriculture also told the committee that his organization has “grave concerns” about the proposed legislation which he said would jeopardize security on the U.S./Mexico border.

“We have grave concerns about giving wilderness designation to land adjacent to the border with all the inherent security issues such as illegal trespass, illegal transport of drugs and people, and land desecration while putting life and limb in serious jeopardy,” Schickedanz said before the committee.

“We have outlined in detail the problems in Arizona with wilderness designation and the problems that law enforcement and Border Patrol encounter and the dangerous situation that has evolved,” Schickedanz said.

The PFPOWH Chairman also testified that the group is in favor of, “permanently preserving and protecting the Organ Mountains and the other special areas in our county.” However he pointed out that there are “viable alternatives” to federal “Wilderness” designation that can be used to protect the land, open spaces and natural resources.

He also told the committee that PFPOWH represents 791 businesses, individuals and organizations in Dona Ana County.