



February 18, 2010

Honorable Jeff Bingaman  
United States Senate  
703 Hart Senate Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bingaman:

The members of the Las Cruces TEA Party, as citizens of Dona Ana County, appreciate your efforts and those of Senator Udall in holding a field hearing in Las Cruces on February 15, 2010, to listen to the concerns and opinions of area residents on the proposed bill, S1689 *Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks Wilderness Bill*. The hearing room was packed with concerned citizens on both sides of the issue, and the consensus of all present was that our mountains and our desert lands need to be protected. The disagreement, however, is not whether our lands need preservation and protection, but rather in the method which should be used in protecting our lands.

We urge you to carefully read and study the testimonies given by Mr. Gary Esslinger, Mr. Tom Cooper, Mr. John Hummer, and Mr. Frank DuBois. These men are not opposed to protecting our land. But they are opposed to the severe restrictions which would be placed upon the users of the land should the bill pass and the designated areas become wilderness. And we stand in support of these arguments. Here are our major concerns:

1. It is our understanding that the maps provided to the committee along with this proposed bill are incomplete. Please Google a map of southern Dona Ana County. If you look at the topographical map, the area indeed looks like only vast land dotted with mountains and cinder cones. But look at a close-up. You will see that there is a web of roads to service windmills, drinkers, pipelines, hunters, and recreationists. The evidence of human habitation and development is quite obvious. It does not fit the Wilderness Act of 1964 definition of remote, primeval, and pristine areas where "the imprint of man's work (is) substantially unnoticeable."
2. We urge you to carefully read the testimonies of Mr. Gary Esslinger and Mr. Joe Delk which address the issues concerning flood control and capture of flood waters in the area. Future growth of Las Cruces is dependent upon the availability of water, whether it comes from under ground or from rains. People who have not lived in this desert area simply do not realize the ferocity and devastating damage that can be done by sudden and unpredictable summer thunderstorms as evidenced by the Hatch floods of 2006. Nor do they realize the scarcity of water from underground sources. A wilderness designation would prohibit future improvements to alleviate the water issues in our community.
3. The issue of border security is perhaps the most urgent concern of area residents. Consider the desecration of the land and the security issues in southern Arizona in the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. A small "buffer zone" along the New

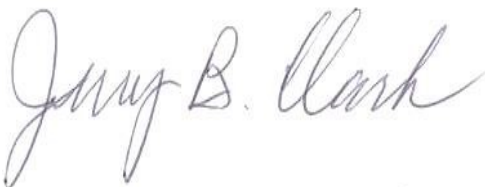
Mexico-Mexican border is not going to resolve the problem of illegals crossing the border. The ranchers in the Potrillo Desert Peaks area now work closely with border patrol in trying to apprehend drug smugglers, gun runners, gangs and other violators. Criminals will have vehicles, but law enforcement will be restricted.

Ranchers are apprehensive about leaving their families unprotected even now when the Border Patrol has unlimited access to the area. If this is designated wilderness, law enforcement will be severely limited. Our law enforcement officers need the flexibility to *patrol, not just pursue*. Our local sheriff has publicly stated he will not send his deputies into the wilderness areas because of lack of radio communications and without the use of motorized vehicles. The number of Border Patrol officers assigned to this area is inadequate now; yet President Obama recently declared that he will be reducing the number of Border Patrol agents along the southern New Mexico border.

Finally, we urge the committee to seriously consider the challenge by Mr. Frank DuBois who asked Senator Bingaman to take the lead in composing legislation which would preserve and protect our land without the wilderness designation. Each of us wants to continue to admire the grandeur of the majestic Organ Mountains, take our families there for picnics, and watch the vermilion colors of a sunset on the landmark of the Mesilla Valley. Each of us wants to be assured that ranchers can continue to earn a livelihood on the west mesa area of the Potrillos. And each of us wants to be secure in our homes knowing that the Border Patrol and law enforcement are uninhibited in their efforts to patrol and protect our country's southern border. A compromise can be reached to allow for the undisturbed beauty of our Organ Mountains and the continued use of our surrounding deserts without jeopardizing the welfare, security and safety of our citizens.

I request this letter and enclosures be made part of the official hearing record on S.1689.

Respectfully,



Jerry Clark, President  
Las Cruces TEA Party  
P.O. Box 1168  
Las Cruces, NM 88004

enc: Las Cruces TEA Party Resolution dated 2/10/10  
Wilderness brochure  
photos





**WHEREAS** The Wilderness Act of 1964 states that any lands designated as wilderness will not allow the use of motorized vehicles or mechanical equipment within such area, and

**WHEREAS** the designation of Federal land as wilderness means:

- a) Campers will not be allowed motorized access, and
- b) Hunters will not be allowed motorized access, and
- c) Tourists, general recreationists and the handicapped community will not be allowed motorized access, and

**WHEREAS** neither motorized vehicles nor mechanical equipment can be used to construct or maintain flood control projects, thereby threatening the health and safety of the citizens, and

**WHEREAS** neither motorized vehicles nor mechanical equipment can be used by the Border patrol or state or local law enforcement, thereby threatening the health and safety of the citizens,

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** The Las Cruces TEA Party opposes the designation of land as wilderness in Dona Ana County and strongly recommends that where Federal land is deserving of protection a designation other than wilderness be utilized, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** on this 10<sup>th</sup> day of February 2010, the Las Cruces TEA Party supports the public having more, not less, access to Federal land for their use and enjoyment.