

May 26, 2011

The Honorable John Barrasso  
U.S. Senate  
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

**Re: Grazing Improvement Act of 2011**

Dear Senator Barrasso:

The Public Lands Council (PLC), American Sheep Industry Association (ASI), National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), Association of National Grasslands (ANG) and undersigned livestock groups strongly support the Grazing Improvement Act of 2011. This legislation will be a great contribution to our goal of providing a stable business environment to our members, federal lands ranchers, who face ever-increasing uncertainty as to the future of their livestock grazing permits on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service. Through no fault of their own, our members risk the loss of their grazing permits due to the abiding and substantial backlog of required environmental analysis by the agencies. Your bill would alleviate this problem.

Each year, our members rely on appropriation rider language to ensure their permits will be reissued when the agencies are unable to complete the required environmental analysis.. Because the agencies are unable to complete, on time, the environmental analyses required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), they are assailed with lawsuits by special interest groups whose purpose is to eliminate livestock grazing from public lands. These lawsuits consume considerable agency resources, further delaying the required NEPA analyses and perpetuating the cycle of missed deadlines and litigation.

By extending the life of a grazing permit from 10 years to 20 years, your legislation would reduce the number of allotments due for environmental analysis each year. The bill would also allow permits to be renewed under existing terms and conditions until the renewal process is complete, and allow for categorical exclusions of grazing permits if the agency is to continue current grazing management under the permit. These and other provisions granting added protections in the courts will provide our members stability and assurances they need in order to continue successful operations.

The continued success of our members' ranching operations holds great implications for the landscapes and rural economies of the west. Failed operations lead to the fragmentation of private and public lands and the loss of wildlife habitat. Communities that depend on the continued presence of federal lands ranchers are already experiencing the hardships that accompany the loss of grazing permits. This legislation is of great importance to our members, and we look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure its success.

Sincerely,

Public Lands Council  
American Sheep Industry Association  
Association of National Grasslands  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association

Arizona Cattle Growers' Association  
Arizona Wool Producers Association  
California Cattlemen's Association  
California Wool Growers Association  
Colorado Cattlemen's Association  
Colorado Wool Growers Association  
Idaho Cattle Association  
Idaho Wool Growers Association  
Montana Stockgrowers Association  
Montana Public Lands Council  
Montana Association of State Grazing Districts  
Montana Wool Growers Association  
New Mexico Stock Growers' Association  
New Mexico Wool Growers, Inc.  
Nevada Cattlemen's Association  
Nevada Wool Growers Association  
North Dakota Stockmen's Association  
Oregon Cattlemen's Association  
Oregon Sheep Growers Association  
South Dakota Public Lands Council  
Utah Cattlemen's Association  
Utah Wool Growers Association  
Washington Cattlemen's Association  
Washington State Sheep Producers  
Wyoming Stock Growers Association  
Wyoming Wool Growers Association