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PLC, NCBA Strongly Support Legislation to Improve Federal Lands Grazing Permit Process

— Bill Will Provide Agency Efficiencies and Stability to Grazing Permit Process

WASHINGTON (May 27, 2011) – U.S. Senators John Barrasso (R-Wyo.); Orrin Hatch (R-Utah); John Thune (R-S.D.); Michael Enzi (R-Wyo.); Dean Heller (R-Nev.); and Michael Crapo (R-Idaho) late yesterday, May 26, 2011, introduced the Grazing Improvement Act of 2011 (S. 1129) to improve livestock grazing permitting on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands. John Falen, [Public Lands Council](#) President and Nevada rancher, said the future of grazing permits has caused great uncertainty among grazing permit holders who have relied on language being included in annual federal appropriations bills to ensure their permits will be renewed on time.

“From the constant threat of environmental activists filing lawsuits to end grazing on federal lands to the unprecedented threat of overregulation from the federal government, public lands ranchers are facing very serious threats to our way of life. This bill will provide welcome relief by ending some of the uncertainty and instability of the federal grazing permit process,” Falen said. “This commonsense legislation will provide the flexibility needed to improve efficiencies at both BLM and USFS. It will provide the stability that the grazing industry and rural economies need in the West, and should be passed by Congress and signed into law without delay.”

For more than a decade, members of Congress have included language in federal appropriations bills to allow BLM and USFS to renew grazing permits under existing terms and conditions until the renewal process is complete. Bill Donald, president of the [National Cattlemen’s Beef Association](#) and Montana rancher, said the Grazing Improvement Act codifies that language. He added that extending the life of grazing permits from 10 to 20 years, as the bill would do, will reduce the number of allotments due for environmental analysis each year, which have caused a substantial backlog at the agencies.

“While the agencies are struggling to deal with the backlog of paperwork to review and renew grazing permits, radical environmentalists are waiting in the wings to file a lawsuit every time the agencies miss a deadline,” Donald said. “These frivolous lawsuits consume agency resources, further delaying environmental analyses and perpetuating the cycle of missed deadlines and litigation.”

In the end, Donald and Falen said it’s about jobs and the economy. They said ranching is the backbone of many communities, providing stable jobs and contributing to the economy of rural America.

“President Obama talks about revitalizing rural America. If he is serious about that, he and all elected officials need to realize a thriving ranching industry is critical to economic growth and job creation in rural communities,” Donald said. “This legislation will ensure ranchers are able to continue providing stable jobs and investing in their communities. We urge all senators to support this important legislation.”