

**ALASKA WILDERNESS LEAGUE * AMERICAN BIRD CONSERVANCY *
AMERICAN RIVERS * CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY * CENTER FOR
NATIVE ECOSYSTEMS * CONSERVATION LAW FOUNDATION *
CONSERVATION NORTHWEST * DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE * EARTHJUSTICE *
ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA * ENDANGERED SPECIES COALITION *
GEOS INSTITUTE * GREENPEACE * INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR ANIMAL
WELFARE * LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS * NATIONAL AUDUBON
SOCIETY * NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL * PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY * RESTORE: THE NORTH WOODS *
SAVE OUR WILD SALMON COALITION * SEA TURTLE CONSERVANCY * SIERRA
CLUB * SOCIETY FOR CONSERVATION BIOLOGY * THE CENTER FOR PLANT
CONSERVATION * THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF THE UNITED STATES * THE
WILDERNESS SOCIETY * UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS * WESTERN
NEBRASKA RESOURCES COUNCIL * WORLD WILDLIFE FUND**

June 9, 2011

**OPPOSE THE CORNYN AND INHOFE AMENDMENTS TO UNDERMINE THE
ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (Cornyn 397 and Inhofe 429)**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our undersigned organizations and the millions of Americans we represent, we are writing to urge you to oppose Amendments #397 proposed by Senator John Cornyn, #429 proposed by Senator James Inhofe, and any similar amendments to S. 782, the Economic Revitalization Act of 2011. These amendments would prohibit protection of the dunes sagebrush lizard and the lesser prairie chicken under the Endangered Species Act. These extreme and unnecessary amendments should be opposed broadly because they set a dangerous precedent for the Endangered Species Act and specifically because these animals are in desperate need of protection.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is one of the most visionary conservation laws ever enacted. When it was passed by Congress nearly 40 years ago, this nation made a historic commitment to save all species, no matter how great or small, from the irreparable loss of extinction. In so doing, Congress also was serving humanity – to protect an imperiled species, its habitat also must be protected, in turn protecting healthy natural systems that provide us with clean water, clean air, food, medicines and other products we all need to live healthy lives. These amendments violate the very spirit and purpose of the ESA by singling out individual species one by one and barring them from ever being protected under the Act, based entirely on political considerations rather than on the fundamental scientific principles that have served our nation so well for decades.

Both the dunes sagebrush lizard and the lesser prairie chicken are in dire need of protection. Both have the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listing priority number of 2 out of 12, meaning they face severe and immediate threats. The dunes sagebrush lizard has been a candidate for protection since 2001 and the lesser prairie chicken since 1998. The Fish and Wildlife Service has taken significant

steps to protect these species as candidates and avert the need for listing, but the efforts thus far have failed to shield both from their greatest threat – loss of habitat. And while proponents of these amendments are advancing the view that listing a species under the ESA is a death knell for local economies, in reality, the ESA is one of America’s most flexible environmental laws, providing many exceptions and alternatives that allow economic growth while continuing to protect America’s wildlife heritage.

Our organizations opposed a provision included in the final FY 2011 Continuing Resolution that legislatively delisted wolves in the Northern Rockies. However, these amendments would establish a new and sweeping precedent that is even more dangerous, by actually amending the ESA to exclude particular species on the brink of extinction from ever receiving protection based not on science but on political calculations. These efforts represent an extreme anti-environmental agenda unworthy of our nation’s great environmental legacy. We urge you to oppose these and any similar amendments. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Alaska Wilderness League
American Bird Conservancy
American Rivers
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Native Ecosystems
Conservation Law Foundation
Conservation Northwest
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Ecological Society of America
Endangered Species Coalition
Geos Institute
Greenpeace
International Fund for Animal Welfare
League of Conservation Voters

National Audubon Society
Natural Resources Defense Council
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
RESTORE: The North Woods
Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition
Sea Turtle Conservancy
Sierra Club
Society for Conservation Biology
The Center for Plant Conservation
The Humane Society of the United States
The Wilderness Society
Union of Concerned Scientists
Western Nebraska Resources Council
World Wildlife Fund