

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 20, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1848 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,

Thank you for your commitment to reducing regulatory burdens that harm the American people. Our states have benefited by your and President Trump's leadership in this regard. We urge you to continue down this common sense path by determining a listing for the lesser prairie-chicken (LPC) under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is not warranted.

The LPC was listed as a threatened species in March of 2014 following a multi-year drought that plagued the habitat area and reduced population numbers. That listing was vacated in September of 2015 by the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas because the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) failed to consider the impact of voluntary conservation efforts to preserve the LPC habitat area. The FWS withdrew its appeal of the court decision, instead electing to move forward with a new Species Status Assessment and will ultimately issue a 12-month finding on a petition to list the species.

Stakeholders in our states are committed to preserving the LPC and its habitat area. By investing millions of private and public dollars into habitat preservation, we've seen significant progress made in improving the bird's population and securing its future. While the voluntary initiatives currently in effect can and should be improved to maximize conservation gains, it is notable the population has increased by approximately 71 percent since the peak of the drought in 2013 without ESA regulations in place due to increased rainfall and on-the-ground conservation measures.

By electing to list the LPC in spite of the unprecedented level of voluntary conservation efforts, the Obama Administration significantly reduced the incentive for stakeholders to pursue future initiatives to preserve the species. The heavy-handed approach also sent a strong signal to those working to preserve species nationwide that no amount of private investment or voluntary conservation could satisfy the federal government. If the listing of a species is viewed as inevitable, stakeholders lose the incentive to invest in private, voluntary conservation efforts.

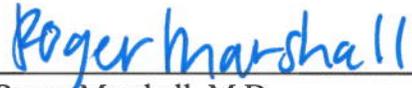
You have the opportunity to chart a different course than the previous administration that reduces regulatory burdens and encourages stakeholder involvement in the conservation of our nation's wildlife species. We strongly urge you to not make the same mistake of the Obama Administration by listing the species under the ESA. Instead, we encourage the FWS to

collaborate with stakeholders on positive solutions that protect the species without causing unnecessary harm to the livelihoods of the people of our states.

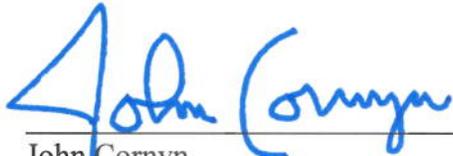
Yours truly,



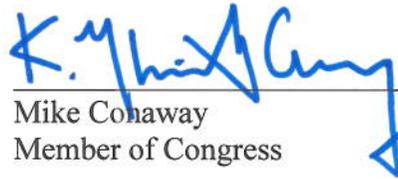
Jerry Moran
United States Senator



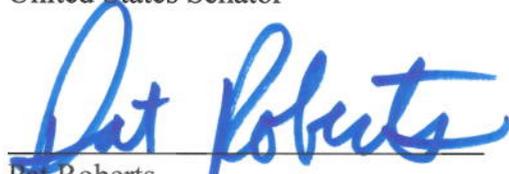
Roger Marshall, M.D.
Member of Congress



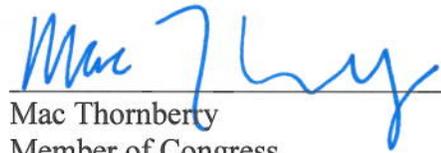
John Cornyn
United States Senator



Mike Conaway
Member of Congress



Pat Roberts
United States Senator



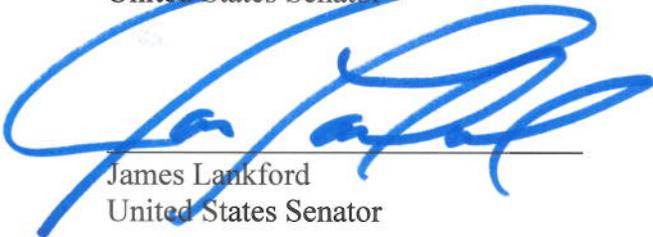
Mac Thornberry
Member of Congress



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



Steve Pearce
Member of Congress



James Lankford
United States Senator



Ron Estes
Member of Congress



Ted Cruz
United States Senator



Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



Tom Cole
Member of Congress

CC: Greg Sheehan, Principal Deputy Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service