Testimony before the
National Parks, Forests & Public Lands Subcommittee
H.R. 846, Idaho Land Sovereignty Act
Congressman Raúl Labrador
Tuesday, September 13, 2011

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Grijalva, I commend you for convening this important hearing today regarding my bill H.R. 846, the Idaho Land Sovereignty Act.

There are two things that Presidents do their last days in office: declare new monuments and pardon convicted criminals. Both leave the public with a bad taste in their mouth. Just as designation of wilderness areas is a Congressional prerogative, I believe the designation of national monuments should also be subject to Congressional oversight.

My legislation would prohibit any presidential administration from imposing new monument designations in the state of Idaho. Clearly the Obama Administration has given us numerous reasons to believe they need to be reined in with their job killing regulations. However, these concerns are not only limited to the current administration.

In January of 2001 the outgoing Clinton Administration shocked western states with its outrageous land grabs that were done via executive order. We in the west remember this very well and we are not going to allow anything like it to happen again. More recently Interior Secretary Salazar and his agency, on December 23, 2010, reminded us that federal agencies still believe they can circumvent Congress to lock up public lands without specific Congressional action.

In my state of Idaho, approximately 67% of all lands are owned by the federal government. Of that, 4,522,717 acres are wilderness, making Idaho the state with the most acres of designated wilderness areas. For that reason, it is critically important that Idahoans continue to access our federal lands for the multiple uses they were designed. It is unacceptable to make lands off-limits through any process that is not an act of Congress.

The Bureau of Land Management asserts that livestock grazing is a major activity on public lands in Idaho. Actually, 800,000 AUMs (Animal Unit Months) of livestock forage are authorized annually in Idaho under BLM management. Livestock grazing is outlined in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act and the Taylor Grazing Act

as being among authorized multiple-uses. The economic losses to Ranchers who have traditionally been good stewards of BLM grazing leases would be immeasurable.

Tourism and motorized recreation are important industries in Idaho. If new monument designations are established, the potential for road closures and limited OHV access has the potential to be detrimental to the local economies.

I urge my colleagues to protect our authority and the power of Congressional oversight. If any administration were to impose additional restrictions to the public lands in Idaho through the designation of new monument areas, the detriment to my state could be vast. Administrative land grabs prohibit stakeholder input at the detriment to our rural economies.

Mr. Chairman, I don't oppose public lands. I simply oppose efforts by an out-of-touch administration to forcibly lock up public lands with no Congressional oversight.