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APPROPRIATIONS
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
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ENERGY AND NATURAL
RESOURCES
SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON AGING
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

July 20, 2000

Mr. Charles Harris
President
321 Ada Street
Boise, Idaho 83702

Dear Charles:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Land and Water Conservation Fund and H.R. 701, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 1999. I appreciate your thoughtful comments.

As you may know, H.R. 701 (and its companion legislation in the Senate, S. 25) has three main objectives: provide monies for coastal impact assistance, standardize funding for land acquisitions, and create an additional funding stream to states for wildlife conservation. The bill sets up a formula to distribute Outer-Continental Shelf royalties to an off-budget trust fund to finance the different programs.

I support some of the programs, such as the ones you mentioned, funded by this bill, and have worked for years to fund them. For instance, S. 25 funds the Stateside Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at an amount equal to the federal side. For years now, the Stateside LWCF has not been funded, and when it was funded it was poorly funded. Additionally, S. 25 funds the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program. Both of these programs are important to establish parks and other recreation facilities in areas which do not enjoy the same open spaces we do in the West. Having raised children in the Washington, DC, area during my time serving Idaho in Congress, I have come to understand the importance of having parks for all of us, but especially for our children, to use and enjoy.

Additionally, I support giving grants to states for wildlife conservation as long as it is not earmarked for specific species. Too often states are charged with wildlife conservation and management, yet have critically underfunded budgets. This money will help everyone enjoy wildlife for years to come.

That said, I do have a major problem setting up a multi-billion dollar off-budget trust fund to finance federal land acquisitions. Those of us from the West understand all too well the impact of massive federal land ownership, and know that the federal government ought to manage its current land holdings better before we allow it to acquire more land. While the bill contains many good things, this provision could make or break this bill, and, as it stands, would be reason enough for me to oppose this legislation.

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304 NORTH 8TH STREET
BOISE, ID 83702

HARBOR PLAZA
610 HUBBARD, SUITE 121
COEUR D'ALENE, ID 83814

846 MAIN STREET
LEWISTON, ID 83501-1864

ROOM 193
801 E. SHERMAN STREET
POCATELLO, ID 83201

1292 ADDISON AVENUE EAST
TWIN FALLS, ID 83301

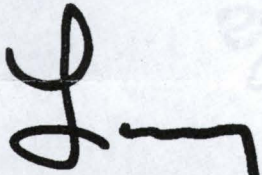
SUITE 101
490 MEMORIAL DRIVE
IDAHO FALLS, ID 83402

<http://craig.senate.gov>

I am working with Senators Murkowski and Landrieu, the chief sponsors of the legislation, to resolve our differences. I am not sure if we will be able to reach a common ground, and it appears as if S. 25 in its current form will not pass the Senate. As this process moves forward, I will work to help the programs which are important in this bill, such as the ones you mentioned, while protecting the values which are important to the West. It is my firm belief that we do not need more federal land in the West.

Again, thank you for contacting me. Please let me know if there is anything else I can do for you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Craig". The signature is stylized with a large initial "L" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

LARRY E. CRAIG
United States Senator

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