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COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public
Lands, Chair
Subcommittee on Water and Power

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections
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The Honorable Barack Obama
President, United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington, DC

Dear President Obama,

I was happy to learn that you will be in Arizona this week and taking time to visit the Grand Canyon with your family.

As the Chair of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, I believe this visit and other visits you are making to our Public Lands this month are a great opportunity for your family to appreciate our country's greatest treasures. In addition, I believe your visit encourages the public to partake in the vast public lands this country has to offer.

As you and your family travel to the Grand Canyon I would like to bring an issue that I have been working on for the last year and a half in order to defend the Grand Canyon.

Under your predecessor, permitting was granted to allow exploratory drilling for uranium within a few miles of the Grand Canyon National Park's South Rim, a popular tourist attraction and protected area. The drilling took place on the Kaibab National Forest under categorical exclusions from the National Environmental Policy Act with very little environmental review and without public comment or involvement.

Last Congress and this Congress, I introduce legislation, titled the Grand Canyon Watersheds Protection Act of 2009 (H.R. 644), to withdraw approximately one million acres near the Grand Canyon from mineral exploration under the 1872 Mining Act and provide permanent protection to both the Canyon itself, as well as to the Colorado River flowing through the Grand Canyon, which provides drinking water for tens of millions of citizens in the region.

In 2008, then Secretary of Interior Kempthorne refused to uphold an emergency resolution of the House Committee on Natural Resources, allowed under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) 43 U.S.C. § 1714(e), directing him to temporarily withdraw public lands identified in the legislation. In addition to the directive from the Committee, testimony and

letters of support for the withdrawal of the area from mining were submitted by the Superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park, Coconino County supervisors, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the Southern Nevada Water Authority, the President of the Navajo Nation, and the chairpeople of the Hualapai, Hopi, Kaibab-Paiute, and Havasupai tribes.

Former Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano was the first to request that the Secretary of Interior adopt an emergency withdrawal. In a letter dated March 5, 2008, the Governor noted that "...the dramatic rise in uranium prices over the last three years has created a 'boom' that has the potential to seriously harm Grand Canyon National Park and the water quality of the lower Colorado River."

In mid-July 2009, as you are aware, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar took initial steps and decided to segregate nearly 1 million acres of federal lands in the Arizona Strip for two years while the Department evaluates whether to withdraw these lands from new mining claims for an additional 20 years.

I praise this first step, and I want to encourage you and your Administration to do more to protect this American landmark. While mining for uranium may be necessary and unavoidable in some cases, the Grand Canyon and the water source of the West, the Colorado River, are too precious to risk contaminating with radioactive material. Furthermore, the opinions of the Native Nations who live near or in the Canyon, who have been gravely harmed by past mining must be respected. For example, some of these Native Nations have explicit language outlawing uranium mining on their lands due to the adverse effect uranium mining has had on the health of their respective members.

Mr. President, I welcome you to the Grand Canyon and Arizona, and I ask you to consider taking a further step and pursue a permanent protection of our national treasure. Enjoy your visit and remember, it is a dry heat.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress