



January 18, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 2005

Senator Jeff Bingaman
703 Hart Senate Office
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Tom Udall
110 Hart Senate Office
Washington DC 20510

As Hispano leaders in New Mexico, a state that leads the nation with a 46.3% Hispanic population, we are **writing to convey our strong support for the protection of the environmentally, culturally, and historically rich landscapes of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region in Doña Ana County, New Mexico.** Hispano culture and presence in New Mexico is and has always been closely connected to our states rich public lands. These areas provide our families and communities with recreation, hunting, traditions and so much more. Throughout time, they have also brought travelers and tourists, and with them economic development. As such, protecting these natural treasures is an important priority to us, and to our future.

No place in New Mexico has the abundance of rich and nationally unique Chihuahuan Desert lands than Doña Ana County. Whether it's the famous Organ Mountains that outline the town of Las Cruces and the historic Camino Real Trail or the Sierra de las Uvas Mountains that house thousands of Native American petroglyphs and pictographs that lie on canyon walls from earlier civilizations, these lands call for national protection. In turn, our country would be so much richer preserving both the unique southwestern landscape and its incredible western history.

Since the first settlers started north on the Camino Real, lands like the Sierra de Las Uvas, Doña Ana, Robledo, and Organ Mountains have played large roles in Hispano life and culture. Hunting and traditional gathering activities continue to this day, and bind generations of Hispano families together. Surging interests amongst Hispanic sportsmen also means more families are taking to our wilderness in pursuit of desert mule deer, quail, and javelina in Doña Ana County.

Fortunately, President Obama and Congress have the power to protect lands cherished by the Hispanic and American community. Well beyond their importance to the Hispanic community, the Mountains of Doña Ana County include important nationally unique historical resources including the Camino Real and the Butterfield Stagecoach trail, Geronimo's Cave and Robledo Peak, Billy the Kid's "Outlaw Rock," and countless archeological sites. Some of these lands have been given interim protection as Wilderness Study Areas, while others remain vulnerable to a variety of threats.

Recent polls demonstrate New Mexicans strongly support protecting these lands, with the highest support amongst the Hispanic population and the community of Las Cruces. I believe now is the time

for action to protect the unique Organ Mountain – Desert Peaks region and secure our rich cultural heritage, natural resources, and economic potential of Southern New Mexico forever.

Sincerely, (see p. 2)

Governor Jerry Apodaca (1975-1979)

Attorney General Patricia Madrid (1999-2007)

Land Commissioner and Mayor of Albuquerque Jim Baca (1983–1986, 1991–1993), (1997-2001)

House Majority Leader Ken Martinez, Grants

State Auditor Hector Balderas, Wagon Mound

Mayor of Mesilla Nora Barraza, Doña Ana County

Mesilla Trustee Jesus Caro

Mayor of Las Cruces Ken Miyagishima

State Senator Mary Jane Garcia, Doña Ana County

Las Cruces City Councilor Olga Pedroza

Las Cruces City Councilor Miguel Silva

Las Cruces Public Schools, Board Member Maria Flores

Albuquerque City Council Vice-President Ray Garduño

State Representative Antonio Lujan, Doña Ana County

State Representative Joni Gutierrez, Doña Ana County

State Representative J Paul Taylor, Doña Ana County (1987-2005)

Doña Ana County Commissioner Oscar Vasquez Butler (2002-2010)

Doña Ana County Commissioner Dolores Saldaña – Caviness

Doña Ana County Commissioner Leticia Benavidez

State Senator Eric Griego, Albuquerque

Martin Chavez, Mayor of Albuquerque (1993-1997, 2001-2009)

State Representative Miguel P. Garcia (House Labor Committee Chair), Albuquerque

State Representative Rick Miera (House Education Committee Chair), Albuquerque

State Representative Antonio “Moe” Maestas, Albuquerque

San Miguel County Commissioner John Olivas

State Representative Rudy Martinez, Grant County

New Mexico Wildlife Federation President Ray Trejo, Deming

Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces President John Muñoz

Paul Martinez, Past President of LULAC, New Mexico

Jessica Martinez, Past National President of LULAC Youth

Kent Salazar, National Wildlife Federation Board Member

LULAC, New Mexico

LULAC, Las Cruces

Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces

Anthony Women's Intercultural Center

CAFE (Communities of Action and Faith)

Latino Sustainability Institute

Mesquite Community Action Committee