

**Testimony of Ranking Member Markey
Before the Committee on Rules
Rule for H.R. 2578: Republican Lands Package
June 18, 2012**

Chairman Dreier, Ranking Member Slaughter and Members of the Rules Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify regarding a proposed rule for H.R. 2578.

Apparently, the Rules Committee plans to insert the texts of 13 other bills, all but one sponsored by Republicans, into the shell of H.R. 2578 prior to the bill reaching the House floor.

Republicans in the House have roundly criticized omnibus bills in the past as an affront to regular order and the justification for pursuing an omnibus in this case is unclear.

Many of the measures to be inserted into this package have been available for consideration by the House for months and, given that it is only June, there is ample time to give these bills more careful consideration than will be possible as part of this rushed package.

Democrats have supported public lands omnibus measures in previous Congresses. In stark contrast to this measure, however, those packages were the product of negotiation and compromise and, in the end, were actually enacted into law.

As far as I am aware, this package has been negotiated within the House Republican Caucus only and is not expected to receive serious consideration by the Senate.

There is no justification for the House to engage in this irregular, rushed floor process for a package that is dead on arrival.

Regarding the substance of this package, Members should be aware that this is a collection of extreme, enormously controversial bills; in fact, the Rules Committee Print includes something for everyone to oppose.

Title 1 will flood part of a Wild and Scenic River; Title 3 is an earmark to an Alaskan Native Corporation that will facilitate clear-cutting in the Tongass National Forest.

Titles 4 and 5 appear to create new parks but include harmful provisions that would cripple the management of these units; Title 7 would authorize the death penalty for sea lions whose only crime is eating fish; Title 10 would overturn a consent decree protecting endangered turtles from being run over by off-road vehicles and Title 11 would extend the practice of below-cost grazing on public lands.

Unbelievably, Title 14 would create a 100-mile “operational control zone” along our northern and southern borders within which the Border Patrol could suspend 36 environmental laws and seize control of all public land management.

Mr. Grijalva and Mr. DeFazio have filed amendments to address some of the most egregious aspects of this package and I have filed an amendment to at least test whether taxpayers can receive a better return from public lands grazing. Mr. Moran has filed an amendment to grant the sea lions clemency. I would ask that the Rules Committee provide an open rule for this bill but failing in that, I ask that these amendments be made in order.

Ramming this cobbled-together package of extreme, damaging bills through the House is unwarranted; were this package enacted, it would do significant harm to natural resources, local economies and local communities across the country.

Along with transportation, higher education and equal pay for equal work, public lands has traditionally been an area where the Congress was able to achieve bipartisan consensus; that no longer appears possible on any of these issues.

This package abandons any hope of enactment, or even cooperation, in favor of an exercise based on scoring political points. I would urge the Rules Committee and the House to pursue other priorities.