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July 20, 2026

The Honorable Mike Lee
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy and
Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy and
Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Lee and Ranking Member Heinrich,

I respectfully urge the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources to advance H.R. 845, *the Pet and Livestock Protection Act*, legislation recently passed by the U.S. House of Representatives to remove the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) from the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) list. The bill reflects both the best available science and the urgent needs of rural communities across the West, where wolf-livestock conflicts have escalated sharply under the current federal listing.

Recent research from the University of California, Davis underscores why congressional action is warranted. The UC Davis study, conducted by wildlife ecologists and veterinary researchers, found that California's wolves rely heavily on cattle as a primary food source.¹ GPS collar data, scat analysis, and movement modeling showed that wolf foraging activity consistently centers around grazing operations, with cattle representing a substantial portion of wolf diet composition.² These findings confirm what ranchers have reported for years: wolf presence in California is directly associated with repeated depredations, herd stress, and significant economic loss.

Equally important, the study found that wolves in California are not nutritionally constrained, nor dependent on limited wild prey. Instead, they are thriving in human-dominated landscapes, expanding pack territories, and exhibiting stable reproduction,³ which are all indicators of a recovered population consistent with the Northern Rockies and Pacific Northwest. These

¹ University of California, Davis. "California Wolves Feed Heavily on Cattle, Study Finds." UC Davis Food & Agriculture, February 2025. <https://www.ucdavis.edu/food/news/california-wolves-feed-heavily-cattle-study-finds>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

conclusions align with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's own recent Species Status Assessment, which determined that wolves nationwide are genetically healthy, demographically stable, and no longer meet ESA criteria for threatened or endangered status.⁴

Despite this, federal ESA listing leaves states and producers with virtually no management tools. In California, unless granted a Federal ESA §10 permit,⁵ lethal handling is prohibited under all circumstances, even after repeated depredations. The process for obtaining this permit is extremely lengthy, regulatorily burdensome, and offers no guarantee that ranchers will be able to protect their cattle in the North State. Without these permits, ranchers cannot protect their herds, wildlife managers cannot respond to escalating conflicts, and rural communities bear the full burden of a species that has biologically recovered but remains legally frozen in an outdated regulatory status.

H.R. 845, *the Pet and Livestock Protection Act* provides a clear, durable solution. By delisting the gray wolf legislatively, Congress can restore state-led wildlife management consistent with the ESA's cooperative federalism framework, provide ranchers and rural communities with practical tools to protect livestock and pets, and reduce litigation cycles that have repeatedly overturned administrative delisting rules.

This bill gives states the authority to determine how to manage predatory wolf populations. If the gray wolf is officially delisted, it is critical that the state's congressional delegation in California work closely with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to ensure effective lethal deterrents are in place to protect cattle and our rural economies. Delisting will finally allow states to tailor management to local ecological conditions and community needs, rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all federal prohibition that no longer reflects the species' biological reality.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to advance H.R. 845, *the Pet and Livestock Protection Act* and ensure that federal wolf policy reflects both scientific evidence and the lived realities of rural communities.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



James Gallagher
Member of Congress

⁴ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. *Species Status Assessment for the Gray Wolf in the Western United States*. Washington, DC: USFWS, 2023. https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/20231222_western-wolf-ssa_final_508.pdf.

⁵ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Section 10: Permits for Listed Species." *Endangered Species Act*. Accessed July 2026. <https://www.fws.gov/laws/endangered-species-act/section-10>.