

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 5, 2016

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
212A Whitten Building
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington DC, 20250

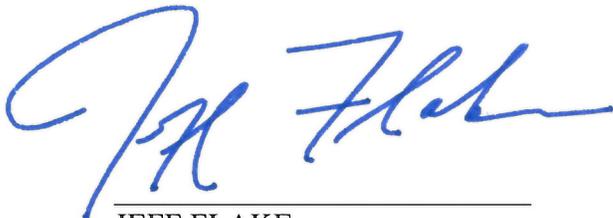
Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write to ask for details on the Department of Agriculture's participation in evaluating a possible new national monument in Arizona. Our offices have received reports from within the administration that there are final efforts underway in the Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of Interior (DOI), and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to prepare a national monument designation similar to the one proposed in H.R. 3882, The Greater Grand Canyon Heritage National Monument Act. We also have heard from a number of credible sources that both USDA and DOI have significant unresolved issues to address before recommending a new national monument.

Because of the effect a new national monument could have on efforts to prevent catastrophic wildfires, we are particularly interested in ensuring that a new national monument is not designated over USDA's objections. Monument proponents would direct the development of a new management plan, despite the recent release of a brand new management plan for the Kaibab National Forest and the development of the largest Environmental Impact Statement of its type. In developing these plans, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) was a collaborative partner with local governments, the forest products industry, sportsmen's groups, academic researchers, and environmental groups. Based on the key role of the USFS in this collaborative effort, the USDA must have a significant role in any decision to designate a new national monument.

We respectfully request that you provide us with a briefing that details the USDA's position, the actions that USDA has taken, any concerns that have been raised by the USFS, and the status of consultations between USDA, DOI and CEQ, regarding a potential new national monument designation in Arizona. As always we ask that this matter be handled in strict accordance with all applicable agency rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines.

Sincerely,



JEFF FLAKE
United States Senator



JOHN MCCAIN
United States Senator