

Chairman Bruce Westerman
House Natural Resources Committee
409 Cannon House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Raul Grijalva
House Natural Resources Committee
2445 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Chair Cliff Bentz
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and
Fisheries
House Natural Resources Committee
409 Cannon House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Jared Huffman
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and
Fisheries
House Natural Resources Committee
2445 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

March 6, 2024

Re: Council on Environmental Quality Funding Cuts in H.R. 7408, America's Wildlife Conservation Act

Dear Chair Bentz and Ranking Member Huffman:

We are writing to express our strong opposition to provisions in H.R. 7408, America's Wildlife Conservation Act," that will completely rescind critical funding to the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). Under the guise of wildlife conservation legislation, provisions in this bill would fundamentally undermine CEQ's ability to ensure federal decisionmaking adequately and efficiently considers not only wildlife conservation, but also critical issues related to environmental justice, public health, and environmental consequences of essential infrastructure and energy development across the federal government.

Section 701 of Chair Westerman's bill would repeal \$62 million in funding to CEQ allocated under sections 60401 and 60402 of the Inflation Reduction Act (Public Law 117-169) (IRA). The IRA rightly made historic investments across the federal government to facilitate timely, efficient, and meaningful environmental reviews. Congress established CEQ in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to not only serve as the President's and the nation's foremost environmental advisor, it also charged CEQ with overseeing the environmental review and public engagement process under NEPA for over 80 federal agencies. Recognizing the critical role CEQ plays in ensuring the federal government meet national conservation and climate goals, Congress allocated money to CEQ fulfill its considerable statutory mandates.

Specifically, the IRA allocated \$32 million to support data collection and disclosure of disproportionate impacts of climate change as well as the cumulative impacts of pollution and temperature rise. An additional \$30 million was provided to provide CEQ with the resources necessary to carry out efficient environmental reviews, enhance government transparency, and improve community engagement. These investments in CEQ, which historically has had an anemic budget of around \$3 million dollars, could transform the efficiency and quality of agency decisionmaking across the federal government. Withdrawing the funding at a time when the Nation is making historic investments in infrastructure and a clean energy economy will only

serve to slow down permitting, sideline meaningful public input, ossify historic environmental injustices, and codify climate denial in to agency decisionmaking.

We strongly urge you to oppose this legislation.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity

Earthjustice

Environmental Law & Policy Center

GreenLatinos

League of Conservation Voters

Natural Resources Defense Council

Oxfam

Sierra Club

Southern Environmental Law Center

Union of Concerned Scientists

WE ACT for Environmental Justice