

September 18, 2019

The Honorable Alan Lowenthal
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Energy and
Mineral Resources
108 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Paul Gosar
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Energy and
Mineral Resources
2057 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Lowenthal and Ranking Member Gosar:

On behalf of the over 400-members of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (NSSGA), I am writing to express our strong opposition to H.R. 2640, the “Buffalo Tract Protection Act” as it would permanently ban aggregate production in areas of central New Mexico—severely limiting critical resources needed in the construction of infrastructure and public works projects for this growing region.

NSSGA is the leading voice and advocate for the aggregates industry, with member companies representing more than 90 percent of the crushed stone and 70 percent of the sand and gravel consumed annually in the United States. Our members are responsible for the essential raw materials found in every home, building, road, bridge and public works project, employing over 100,000 working men and women. Aggregate businesses can be found in every Congressional district and are a trusted resource for all issues related to the aggregate industry.

H.R. 2640 is bad policy, as it would permanently ban aggregate production on thousands of acres of federal land in central New Mexico, and we strongly oppose this bill. Such a ban would severely diminish the ability for communities to access key resources that are necessary for building roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, homes and businesses. Allowing this ban to proceed would have a significant impact on the cost of public works projects due to the necessity for stone, sand and gravel required to develop and repair infrastructure and buildings to be imported into the area. According to conservative estimates, aggregate prices for the Albuquerque metro market would increase 30-40 percent and some projections estimate a 90 percent increase in cost. A vote for H.R. 2640 is a vote to stagnate and diminish the movement of goods and commerce in central New Mexico.

Obviously, with the increased cost to supply aggregates, budgets of local communities and federal entities that are seeking to make infrastructure investments in central New Mexico would be severely diminished – slowing project delivery and harming the economy. In fact, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers, New Mexico is already facing grave infrastructure deficiencies. For example, 6.5% of bridges are rated structurally deficient. Drinking water needs in New Mexico are an estimated \$1.16 billion, and wastewater needs total \$320 million. One hundred sixty-seven dams statewide are considered to be high-hazard potential. The state’s schools have an estimated capital expenditure gap of \$407 million. Eliminating access to a

construction material that is essential to addressing these infrastructure challenges strongly impedes New Mexico's ability to compete in an increasingly global marketplace.

While this legislation will clearly create a competitive disadvantage that has negative economic impacts for the people of New Mexico, it will also have significant environmental impacts. Delaying improvements to New Mexico's congested roads or eliminating access to a material that is needed to develop new water projects and cleaner energy sources will have real environmental impacts on establishing cleaner air and water and access to public lands.

I greatly appreciate your consideration of our views and your important work on the Committee. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Michele Stanley, NSSGA Vice President of Government and Regulatory affairs at mstanley@nssga.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Johnson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael W. Johnson
President and CEO
National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association