Did you hear the one about the Russians meddling in U.S. public policy?

No, that’s too broad. To pin it down, we’re talking here about allegations that U.S. Rep. Raul Grijalva’s effort to permanently ban uranium mining in a huge chunk of Northern Arizona is really meant to serve Russian interests in cornering the uranium market.

Grijalva’s legislation is drawing fire from a lot of quarters, not the least from Rep. Paul Gosar, the Republican who represents much of the region.

Gosar contends the mining ban legislation is linked to cash donations made by Russians to groups that support Grijalva.

Perhaps there’s a lot of truth to this, but proving the cause and effect of cash donations to policy proposals is always tough. Moreover, the public is suffering fatigue in connecting dots back to Russia.

So maybe the right call on Grijalva’s land grab should be based on science, economic needs and basic sense.

The Southern Arizona Democrat’s bill builds upon a temporary uranium mining ban imposed on the area during the Obama administration in 2012. It has been upheld by the Supreme Court but does expire in ten years.

Understand the Grijalva measure references the Grand Canyon as much as possible, intending to just scare the heck out people with dual images of nuke and a prime national treasure.

Most of the million acres is nowhere near the Grand Canyon.

Even within the national park, though, naturally occurring uranium deposits mean the mineral is constantly leeching into the Colorado River’s tributaries with no historic ill effects.

Modern mining methods and regulations can prevent additional mine runoffs into the water ways.

Gosar says Grijalva aims to make America dependent on Russia’s uranium. Maybe so, but trade tensions between the U.S. and a number of countries have heightened the need to assure adequate domestic supplies of minerals and metals.

Uranium, a crucial part of the nation’s energy supply as a fuel for power plants, is one of those minerals. Yet the country’s uranium production is near historic lows because of an international oversupply.
As trade rules change, this country can be held hostage by reliance on imported minerals and metals. Russia is a piece of it, but not the only piece by far. In certain scenarios, the nation may very much need that Arizona uranium.

The Mohave County Board of Supervisors and numerous other groups have gone on record opposing the Grijalva land grab.

That's the right view.

The legislation, beyond geo-political implications, is really designed to make liberal environmental groups feel good and raise money for accomplishments that require the opposite of actually doing anything.

Science, national security and Northern Arizona’s economy are on one side of this argument. The other side is Grijalva’s House Resolution 1373.

By: Today's News-Herald