

Route 4, Box 33
Santa Fe, N. M.

25 September 1962

The Honorable Thomas G. Morris
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Morris:

The present Congress and in particular the House of Representatives has made an unenviably bad record which will go down in history as a low point in legislative performance. Part of the trouble is owing to the system whereby tenure controls committee chairmanship appointments, which leads to a vice-like grip on debate by reactionary southern congressmen. But this is not the whole story. Responsibility for the record of this do-nothing Congress rests equally with men like you who refuse to fight for socially advanced legislation because they are dominated by parochial and special economic interests to the detriment of Common welfare.

The House of Representatives, though predominantly Democratic, has repeatedly undercut and sabotaged forward-looking, Administration sponsored legislation such as the aid to education bill, the medical aid bill, revision of agriculture-support legislation, tax reform legislation to close loopholes for evasion, and last but not least the wilderness bill. Your position on the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee places you in a position of especial responsibility for the failure of this bill to become a law. Apparently you, together with other western congressmen, are more concerned with assuring the perpetuation of special, short-term, selfish interests of cattlemen, lumbermen, and miners than the more general but less vocal interest of the whole population. And you take this stand in spite of provisions in the Senate version of the bill allowing with drawals of land from wilderness areas in case of national need. The House has acted as though this legislation were immutable. But ultimate sovereignty rests with the Congress as the representative of the best interest and will of all the people. Any legislation, within the framework of the Constitution, can be changed if the need arises.

It is still not too late for Congress to act in the general welfare.

Yours respectfully,

Eliot F. Porter