

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region, strongly urges you to oppose S. 22, the "Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009," which combines more than 100 public land, water, and resource bills into an omnibus federal land-grab bill. This omnibus bill would withdraw millions of acres of public land from energy development, increase government spending by more than \$10 billion, and add even greater restrictions to federally managed lands. Majority Leader Reid has stated that he will schedule a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to the bill on Sunday, January 11, 2009.

The Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 substantially hampers energy development and private property rights by withdrawing millions of acres of land from oil and gas exploration. For example, it withdraws 1.2 million acres of land in Wyoming from mineral leasing and energy exploration, which includes approximately 300 million barrels of recoverable oil and 8.8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. In addition, another 2.1 million U.S. acres would be designated as "wilderness areas," thereby preventing all major recreation on them and prohibiting any new oil and gas leasing.

The federal government already controls more than 650 million acres of land (almost one-third of the entire United States), much of which suffers from chronic maintenance backlogs. The National Park Service estimates the maintenance backlog of projects on the federal lands it manages at \$9 billion. Nevertheless, this bill would shift millions of additional acres to federal control, cost taxpayers billions of dollars, and further erode private property ownership rights.

Shackling U.S. energy exploration and development at this critical time would substantially jeopardize America's already fragile economy. Therefore, the Chamber urges you to vote against this legislation in order to protect private property rights and future U.S. energy independence.

Sincerely,



R. Bruce Josten