

# MOHAVE COUNTY BOARD of SUPERVISORS

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## **BUSTER D. JOHNSON** SUPERVISOR DISTRICT 3

I am speaking today in opposition of the proposed executive action to designate nearly 1.7 million acres of land in northern Arizona as the Grand Canyon Watershed National Monument. This executive action would devastate the future growth of Arizona, and have long lasting economic effects on the counties of Mohave and Coconino. Many who grew up in Arizona from the 1950s through the 1970s know about the five C's. The Five C's are: Copper, Cattle, Cotton, Citrus and Climate. In the early years of the state, the five C's were very important for jobs. Agriculture (farming), ranching and mining jobs helped bring people here to work and play. I remind you of this because it holds true today. An economic analysis performed by Tetra Tech estimated the economic potential should industry, such as uranium mining, be allowed to occur on this land, at around \$29 billion for Mohave and Coconino Counties. While county taxpayers are still feeling the crunch of the latest economic recession, taking away vital land that could be used for mining and/or certain forms of outdoor recreation and tourism will only derail our economic recovery.

As the federal and state government continues to take privately held lands away from our residents, it becomes harder and harder to create jobs and keep our taxpayers employed. In January of 2000, President Bill Clinton signed a proclamation taking away 1 million acres of land in the Arizona Strip area for the Grand Canyon-Parashant National Monument. That monument is now one of 18 monuments in the state which is more than any other state has. Designating land for a new monument will take away even more land in the Arizona Strip area putting it in the hands of the federal government and away from the taxpaying citizens of this state.

Monument designation will cut off access to everyone from 4-wheelers to mining developers. The Parashant Monument took away mining and greatly reduced tourism to the area that effected not only Arizona but our sister state of Utah as well. We are looking to repeat some of the same mistakes with this new monument as we did with Parashant. We are turning the strip area into a barren waste land.

Our state cannot afford to lose any more land to the federal government. Nearly 50% of the state is now owned by the federal government. Mohave County alone has only 10% private land. Why as a matter of public policy is locking down known natural resources wise? The Parashant Monument has not added to the beauty or economy of our state. The only thing it has done has placed "keep out signs" on the land barring our citizens from making a living or enjoying the land.

Protecting our lands can be enhanced with current mining operations and off roaders who want to preserve our lands for future generations to experience. Working together will protect the land far better than no trespassing signs. Allowing economic development on this land would be a great benefit to both the state and Mohave County. It is estimated that allowing uranium mining in this area would create more than a thousand jobs directly related

to mining operations, and many more jobs would be created as a result of the economic activity associated with the mining. Designating this land as a national monument will take away this economic opportunity for the taxpayers of Mohave County and an estimated \$40 million annually in payroll.

Removing public access to this land also does nothing to protect our watershed. Our watershed has been threatened over the past 15 years due to extreme drought conditions and without the necessary tools provided by certain industries, the watershed will continue to be depleted with no remedies to protect the well-being of our citizenry. Water has always been a critical issue in the southwest and we continue to find ways to reduce consumption and recycle wherever possible. This designation will make it more difficult for state and local governments to find the means necessary to ensure our citizens have a continued water supply.

Arizona also faces some of the worse wildfires seen across the U.S. This designation proposes to enclose the entire Kaibab forest, and would prohibit land owners in the area and the U.S. Forest Service from taking the necessary measures to protect private property and the beauty of the Kaibab Nation Forest from the threat of wildfires. The Yellowstone fire of 1987 is the perfect example of what can happen when the federal government has control of the land surrounding our natural forests. The Yellowstone fire destroyed 500,000 acres of the National Park system due to the federal government's philosophy that letting the forest burn was better than maintaining it.

Furthermore, designating this land as a national monument goes against the Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984. This act specified certain areas of the region for multi-purpose use. Designating this land as a monument is ignoring this historical agreement and taking away this valuable land from the taxpayers. If we all work together, we can find ways to preserve the natural beauty of this land while at the same time keeping it open for future generations to enjoy.

Buster D. Johnson  
Mohave County Supervisor  
District III