

## **Barrasso Statement on the Wyoming Range Legacy Act**

**October 25, 2007**

Mr. President, I rise because today is Wyoming's day, literally. It is a long awaited day, a day that is special, a day that is as special as the mountain range that this day centers on, and as special as the State for which this mountain range is named.

This is a day of which I am proud to be a part, joining with the strong majority of Wyoming people who want the legislation I am introducing. It is the Wyoming Range Legacy Act of 2007.

Energy development is a proud part of Wyoming, and it is an important part of our Nation. But equal to that energy heritage is tourism and recreation--also a proud part of Wyoming and an important part of this Nation.

Wyoming is special. Reflecting both aspects of our economy, our people want a special balance between two of our top industries: energy and tourism and recreation.

Some of Wyoming's significant and important energy contributions to this great Nation encompass thousands of acres for our natural gas and energy fields. Meanwhile, independent and strong stands an isolated mountain range 100 miles long and 12,000 feet high. This range is named for our great State. It is that independent and wild mountain range--the Wyoming Range--that I want to focus on today, and well into the future, for the best future for Wyoming and for our people.

As leaders, there are things we do, defining actions, actions that go well beyond everyday issues. They surmount the daily noise and the disagreements, and they rise to the level of something else: It is to doing the right thing.

Today goes beyond the average day for Wyoming. As I said, today is Wyoming's day. It is a great day because it is today that a bill is introduced that will keep this special place on the map for tourism, for recreation, and for sportsmen forever.

We, as a State--the Governor and I--come together, cooperatively, to join in the memory of our dear friend Craig Thomas to finish his work, to keep and enhance the tourism, recreation, hunting, and sportsmen economy of the Wyoming Range, to preserve a key part of Wyoming's heritage.

This legislation, this initiative Craig Thomas was ready to introduce the week he passed goes to the very heart and soul of the great State of Wyoming. Indeed, this is a place where the heart and the soul of Wyoming run free and run wild.

This is 1.2 million acres for Wyoming tourism, sportsmen, and recreationists. This will mean that new, future leasing for oil and gas will be welcomed elsewhere in the State, and the Wyoming Range will remain in the recreational-based economy that now exists.

For those leases that have already been issued, this legislation provides a process for groups or individuals who are focused on conservation to buy back the value of those leases under voluntary purchase, and then retire them forever.

We all must recognize that the issued leases do have a value because they are now legal property. At the same time, we can encourage all at the table--leaders, conservationists, and the private sector--to work toward doing the right thing. That process is now appropriately outside of the legislation and is ongoing.

For the recently issued leases that amount to some 44,000 acres, I have great confidence we will be able to work out creative solutions with respect on all sides.

But let us look at the bigger picture in this bill, with emphasis on

an important, central point: What was the last bold move for Wyoming tourism? I proudly say, 1.2 million acres for Wyoming tourism, for Wyoming sportsmen, and for Wyoming outfitters and guides--all of whom contribute millions to our economy.

This is not a bill that ``locks up" land. To the contrary, it is a bill for economic prosperity, for recreation, and for tourism. What we do in this important piece of legislation is to recognize an economic base and then enhance it. Let me repeat--because this is a very important point--we are taking the existing economic base and enhancing it in the Wyoming Range.

The Wyoming Range is a recreational-based economic zone. Yes, there are symbolic reasons for this initiative. It is the Wyoming Range, after all. But there is hard math at the core of this legislation. Tourism and recreation in our Wyoming economy matters. And doing the right thing matters. It matters for future generations of Wyoming people who will someday hunt and fish and hike in these mountains. It is also a place where Wyoming's agricultural industry has thrived for years. With this legislation, grazing and Wyoming's cowboy heritage will continue to thrive.

I want to read you something from 1961 that still applies very much today. It goes to the heart of maintaining proper balance and multiple use of our land.

Another factor in maintaining balance involves the element of time. As we peer into society's future, we--you and I, and our government--must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering, for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow. We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without asking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage. We want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not to become the insolvent phantom of tomorrow.

Those words were spoken by President Dwight Eisenhower in his

final address as he left the Presidency. The children who were listening to his words back then are now grown and have grandchildren of their own.

The Wyoming Range--the range named for our beloved State--has symbolic meaning, inherent values. It is the heart and the soul of a great State, a spiritual heritage, now a physical reality.

Mr. President, today is Wyoming's day, for the Wyoming range, and for the people who love it.