

## Dana Rohrabacher and Ed Royce Vote Against Major Wilderness Protection bill

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Our Republican Congressional Representatives, Dana Rohrabacher, representing the 46 Congressional District, and Ed Royce, representing the 40th District, voted against a major wilderness preservation bill this past week. The bill, dubbed the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, protects 2 million acres of wilderness from development and was passed by the House without any California Republican support, except for yes votes from Rep. Mary Bono Mack, of Palm Springs, and Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon of Santa Clarita. The bill provides the maximum level of Federal protection for more than 700,000 acres of California wild lands and enhances scenic rivers protection for 8 rivers in California.

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This bill has been called the "most important piece of conservation legislation Congress has considered in many years" (Rep. Nick J. Rahall II, D-W.Va., chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee). Referring to his portion of the omnibus bill, McKeon, a conservative Republican, said "The land in the Eastern Sierra and Northern San Gabriel Mountains areas are some of the most rugged and majestic in California and the country...{this bill} works to protect and designate that land as wilderness....The Act is the product of countless hours of community involvement. Senator Boxer and I worked together and met with virtually every local stakeholder and leader to reach a compromise. This package works for my district because it isn't Congress telling my district how to manage our land; this is my community - my constituents- asking Congress to approve a land use compromise developed and vetted back home in California."

Although the bill did not receive much California Republican support, it did garner bipartisan support from across the Country. The Senate passed the bill on a 77-to-20 vote and it passed the House 285 to 140. As might be expected, the bill was hailed in glowing terms by environmentalists, but many outdoors groups supported it as well. The bill bans motorized vehicles from 2 million acres of wilderness, so the American Motorcycle Association was opposed to the bill. Hunting and fishing groups were supportive of the measure. The bill also prevents energy development from the protected lands, and thus, the Independent Petroleum Assn. of America was against the law.

Your Editors asked for explanations of their "no" votes from our Representatives. We received the following from Rep. Dana Rohrabacher:

"Although there were some positives in the bill, it was procedurally and substantively flawed to the point I could not support it. For example, there are provisions to criminalize fossil collection, with a penalty of up to 5 years in prison, meaning a child or a professional paleontologist who finds a shark tooth fossil along the beach could be subject to prosecution."

"The bill also closes off millions of acres of barren federal lands to energy exploration which has the potential to yield 300 million barrels of recoverable oil domestically, reducing our dependence on foreign oil."

We did not receive any response from Rep. Ed Royce explaining his negative vote.