

March 3, 2006

The Honorable Senator George V. Voinovich
524 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Voinovich:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the 190 members of the Kirtland Bird Club in Cleveland, Ohio, to strongly urge you to oppose any legislation, such as Congressman Pombo's bill that would dismantle or weaken the Endangered Species Act (ESA). If it becomes law, the Pombo bill will undermine the progress that has been made in pre-serving endangered species and the habitats on which they depend and return those species to a time when they were facing extinction.

As I'm sure you know, Senator Voinovich, approximately 90% of Ohio's original wetlands have been converted to other uses. The remaining 10% are important to the environmental health of those areas where they are located, which includes Lake Erie. All of these wetlands play a vital role to many creatures from fish to amphibians to birds by providing food, shelter and stopovers for various migratory birds. Some of the birds such as the American Bald Eagle are endangered; others are covered by Migratory Bird Treaties. The Pombo bill would drastically curtail the protection of wetlands from development and pollution and would negatively impact the creatures that depend on them.

As the New York Times noted in an editorial on February 20, 2006, the House accepted the argument that the ESA is a failure because less than 1% of the approximately 1200 species on the endangered list have recovered sufficiently to be delisted. A better measure of the worth of the ESA is that the populations of about 2/3 of those species on the list, for which data are available, are either stable or improving. Somehow, Congressman Pombo overlooked that statistic.

Actually, the population of the American Bald Eagle has increased to the point that it may soon be ready for delisting. We in the Kirtland Bird Club believe that the recovery of the Bald Eagle illustrates the success of the ESA. The New York Times editorial referenced earlier stated that the recovery of the eagle was helped in large measure by the banning of DDT in 1972, but habitat protection provided by the ESA when the bill became law in 1973 played a crucial role as well. Here in Ohio there were only 4 active eagle nests in the whole state in 1979. According to a recent survey by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), there are now 143 active nests in Ohio.

The increase in the population of the American Bald Eagle in the US as in Ohio did not happen overnight. Thirty-three years elapsed after the ESA became law before the number of active eagle nests in Ohio reached the present level. These numbers illustrate the success of the ESA, but they also demonstrate that endangered populations may not respond quickly to protection. Population recovery takes time.

We in the Kirtland Bird Club hope you take pride, Senator Voinovich, in the recovery of the American Bald Eagle in Ohio and will protect the ESA now and in the future from those who would destroy it.

Sincerely,