

**American Rivers * Center for Biological Diversity * Clean Water Action *
Climate Solutions * Conservation Northwest * Defenders of Wildlife * Earthjustice *
Earthworks * Endangered Species Coalition * Environment America *
Environmental Defense Fund * Environmental Protection Information Center *
Geos Institute * Interfaith Power and Light * Klamath Forest Alliance * KyotoUSA *
League of Conservation Voters * League of Women Voters *
National Estuarine Research Reserve Association * Natural Resources Defense Council *
Oregon Wild * Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility *
Restore America's Estuaries * Rocky Mountain Wild * Sierra Club *
Southern Environmental Law Center * The Lands Council * The Wilderness Society *
Union of Concerned Scientists * US Climate Action Network *
Western Environmental Law Center * Wild Earth Guardians * Wildlands CPR**

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-2803

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1702

The Honorable John A. Boehner
U.S. House of Representatives
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3508

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0508

December 7, 2011

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Pelosi;

We are writing to reiterate our strong opposition to any and all efforts to add anti-environmental riders to the spending and tax bills that Congress is trying to get done before the end of the year. The riders that are being discussed would threaten our air, health, water, wildlife and public lands. As we have said before, this kind of legislating is absolutely contrary to the public interest on both substantive and procedural grounds. At a time when Congress should be working to complete its long-delayed work to fund the government and extend expiring tax provisions, there is no excuse for making the process more difficult by saddling these bills with unpopular provisions that would damage health and the environment.

The public is clearly uninterested in seeing Congress playing political games in these economically difficult times. Yet, trying to add unrelated, anti-environmental riders to last-minute bills is nothing more than hostage-taking. This legislation should not be held up in an effort to force through unrelated matters that have not received proper consideration or public scrutiny.

The riders being suggested are also fundamentally bad policy. Two riders that have received prominent attention in the media make that clear. Delaying pollution limits on industrial boilers and incinerators, for example, could cause up to 28,350 premature deaths, 150,000 asthma

attacks and nearly 19,000 hospital and emergency room visits over three and a half years – the minimum period of delay being proposed. Moreover, the proposed rider would do more than delay a specific safeguard; it would rewrite the underlying law.

Another proposal would force approval of a new route for the 2,000-mile Keystone XL pipeline with almost no review of how it would affect water supplies and other public resources. This seemingly unprecedented effort to turn Congress into a permitting body and to totally rewrite mechanisms in the middle of a process goes far beyond standard practice.

These riders, like the many others being discussed, would not save taxpayers a dime or alter tax policy, but they would do real damage to health and the environment, and they have not received the scrutiny they require, or they have already been defeated in one chamber. Congress should be spending its time trying to conclude the work it needs to complete by the end of the year, not using deadlines as an excuse to kill safeguards on which the public relies.

Sincerely,

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