

**Statement of Congressman Tom Udall (NM-3<sup>rd</sup>)**

**To Members of the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans**

**On H.R. 1464, the "Rare Cats and Rare Canids Act of 2007"**

**September 6, 2007**

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Chairwoman Bordallo, Ranking Member Henry E. Brown, and members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for holding this hearing on H.R. 1464, the Rare Cats and Rare Canids Act of 2007

For those of you who have experienced it, you know that the first time you witness a great cat or a wild dog, you are likely to feel a rush of adrenaline, a sense of awe, and a heightened awareness of your vulnerability. Leading experts in carnivore biology assure us that these majestic animals feel equal anticipation and anxiety when encountering people. These animals are not only icons of the animal world, they are the keystones of their respective food chains and their wellbeing is intrinsically connected with the health of the ecosystems in which they live. To preserve these species is to preserve habitats for the benefit of many species, including human beings.

Lions, cheetahs, leopards, African wild dogs, Ethiopian wolves, jaguars, maned wolves, bush dogs, clouded leopards, snow leopards, dholes, Iberian lynx and European gray wolves face threats from habitat conversion, loss of food sources, illegal trade, and disease. Scientists report that populations of all of these species are sharply declining compared to their historic ranges. African wild dogs and Ethiopian wolves especially are approaching crisis. Populations of snow leopards in Asia have declined due to illegal hunting for their use in traditional Asian medicine.

That is why it is imperative that the United States, through the US Fish & Wildlife Service, support efforts to conserve these predators at the top of the food chain. Modeled after the highly successful Multinational Species Conservation Funds which conserve rhinos, tigers, Great Apes, Asian elephants, African elephants, and marine turtles, H.R.1464 is authorized at \$5 million annually for the conservation of more than a dozen species of

great cats and rare canines existing outside the United States. Acting as umbrella species for entire ecosystems, the health and stability of these iconic species are excellent indicators of human sustainability as well.

With the funding authorized in this bill, capable scientist with the US Fish & Wildlife Service will be able to work with partner organizations to target the most vulnerable species and the most effective projects. By involving local groups in the preservation of these species, a situation of sustainable preservation and community development will emerge. Often, the threats these species face are a result of situations of human desperation. Resources to protect these species are not available in many of the countries where they reside. H.R. 1464 would allow for preservation to take place even in the most desperate of locations, and to the benefit of local communities.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my fellow co chairs of the International Conservation Caucus, Congressman Royce, Congressman Tanner, and Congressman Rogers for their efforts on this bill. As original cosponsors of H.R. 1464, they have worked closely with me and the staff of the international conservation caucus to put together a strong bill that will serve to preserve these icons of the animal world and their dwindling habitats.

Thank you once again for holding this hearing and helping to bring the issue of protection of these great species to the attention of Congress. I welcome any questions you may have.

Thank you