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## Congressional Oversight of the Antiquities Act

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The Antiquities Act was signed into law in 1906 with the intent of protecting archeological resources on public lands. Over the last century, presidential administrations have abused the broad language of the legislation to unilaterally designate hundreds of millions of acres as national monuments with little to no public input or congressional oversight.

The Antiquities Act stipulates that all designations be “confined to the smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected.”<sup>1</sup> However, presidents have failed to limit their designations, creating monuments covering enormous swaths of land that cannot be properly managed or protected. For example, President Clinton was able to designate 1.7 million acres in Utah as the Grand-Staircase-Escalante National Monument with the stroke of a pen – an area 100,000 acres larger than the state of Delaware. In 2016, President Obama designated another 1.36 million acres as the Bears Ears National Monument. Just last month, President Biden designated 917,600 acres in northern Arizona as a national monument despite fierce local opposition.

In addition to being an overreach of executive power, national monument designations inflict a heavy toll on local communities and economic development across the West. The land-use restrictions accompanying national monuments wipe out stable jobs and businesses that support the local economy – including ranching, farming, mining, and timber harvesting.

This bill creates a process that would require congressional approval of national monument designations. Allowing the President unrestricted ability to change the management status of land in a state without any input from representatives of the affected people is an abuse of power that needs reform.

### Bill Specifics

- Amends the Antiquities Act to require that national monument and reservation designations be confirmed by Congress
- Declares that Congress must modify or extend national monument designations within 6 months of establishment, or by the last day of the Congress sitting at the time of establishment, whichever occurs first
- Prevents land designated as a national monument, but not ratified by Congress, from inclusion in the extension or establishment of national monuments for a period of 25 years

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<sup>1</sup> 54 U.S.C. 320301