

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
319 S. 5th St.
Grand Forks, ND 58201
July 13, 2009

Senator Byron Dorgan
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Dorgan,

Many Americans find spiritual renewal in the wilderness. In doing so, they follow the same path walked by Moses who spoke with God in the wilderness of the Sinai and Jesus who was baptized in the wilderness of the Jordan River and numerous others of many faiths. Through creation God nourishes life and provides blessings of sustenance. Special places, deserving of wilderness designation, provide a space for prayer and for retaining the vessels which sustain God's gift of life here on Earth. The red rock canyon lands of Utah are among these treasures.

The wilderness of southern and central Utah, with its wide open spaces, spectacular vistas, and intimate slot canyons, constitutes one of the largest remaining networks of undesignated wild lands in the lower 48 states. These federal lands have wild, rugged characteristics where visitors can enjoy a remote experience iconic of the American West. This special place, once described by Wallace Stegner as "a lovely and terrible wilderness, such a wilderness as [Jesus] and the prophets went out into; harshly and beautifully colored, broken and worn until its bones are exposed, its great sky without a smudge of taint from Technocracy", is deserving of the highest form of land protection America's laws have to offer.

"America's Red Rock Wilderness Act" (ARWA) would provide the protection these lands need and deserve. We write to urge that you support and co-sponsor this legislation.

ARWA would designate 9.4 million acres of land – essentially keeping it as it is today for our families and for future generations. In addition to affording preservation of wildlife and retaining opportunities for hiking, camping, hunting, scientific study, prayer, and spiritual reflection, America's Red Rock

Wilderness Act would also protect a vast array of archeological resources and places sacred to Native Americans. As in many other locales, the protection of this land will also provide a sustainable economic foundation for the people who live amidst God's bounty.

Stewardship of lands and wild places that God has entrusted to our care is both a critical part of our call to protect creation and a responsibility shared by all citizens. We, as people of faith, call upon Congress to establish this kind of recognition, giving permanent protection to this vital part of God's miraculous creation.

Sincerely,

Rev. Jim Shannon