

United States District Judge for the Northern District of Indiana.

Mitch McConnell, Johnny Isakson, Roger F. Wicker, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, Pat Roberts, Roy Blunt, Deb Fischer, David Perdue, Todd Young, John Thune, Mike Rounds, Steve Daines, John Hoeven, Thom Tillis.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 30.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of David Steven Morales, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of David Steven Morales, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

Mitch McConnell, Johnny Isakson, Roger F. Wicker, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Shelley Moore Capito, Steve Daines, Roy Blunt, Deb Fischer, David Perdue, Todd Young, John Thune, Mike Rounds, John Hoeven, Thom Tillis, Lindsey Graham.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN STURGEON

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, it is Thursday afternoon on the Senate floor, and it is one of my favorite times of the week because I get to come down and talk about an Alaskan who has

made a difference in my State and in the country sometimes. This one, by the way, is a big one. I think I am being a little bit presumptuous, but the pages, I think, view this as kind of one of their favorite speeches of the week because you learn about Alaska, and I get to brag about my wonderful State.

Now, I have been hearing a little bit back home that people like to watch this sometimes, but the gentleman I am going to talk about is John Sturgeon. That is him right there in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, and that is him with his hovercraft in Alaska when he is out moose hunting. This is an epic tale—epic, and it just happened. So I am going to be a little bit more long-winded on this “Alaskan of the Week” speech because it is actually really important for Alaskans; it is really important for my colleagues; and it is really, really important for Federal judges who rule on things that relate to Alaska.

We had an epic, huge U.S. Supreme Court case that just came down last week relating to this heroic figure, John Sturgeon, related to the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, ANILCA—that is a mouthful; that is a huge statute that was passed by this body in 1980—and how that has been interpreted over the years, over the decades. The Supreme Court just last week interpreted this case in a way that we Alaskans think it should have been interpreted, but unfortunately Federal Agencies for 40 years have been interpreting it another way. So I am going to talk a little bit about that.

I will begin by talking about John Sturgeon and this battle he waged. Literally, they are going to make a movie out of this someday. Trust me. This is an epic—an American classic—12-year legal battle that he waged so he could go hunt a moose off the Nation River, a river in Alaska, and the Feds were saying he couldn't. So he fought and he fought, and he went to the Supreme Court not once but twice. So are we ready? This is one epic story that, again, I guarantee you they are going to make a movie out of someday.

So let me begin by talking about John Sturgeon, the 74-year-old man right there and what brought him to Alaska. Well, he is from Minnesota, originally and, like so many Alaskans, soon-to-be Alaskans—people watching, we want you to come up and visit, by the way. We want you to come up and live there. He felt the pull of Alaska very early in life.

John says he remembers dreaming about Alaska as a child. When he was graduating from high school, he applied for a few jobs as a hunting and fishing guide, but like many patriotic Americans—actually, many of my fellow Alaskans—he joined the military instead. My State has more veterans per capita than any State in the country. After he finished two tours in Vietnam in the Navy—so we are talking a real heroic guy here—he formed a

plan. He was going to go to college, get a degree in forestry, and then head north to Alaska. That is what he did. He stuck with the plan.

As soon as he finished his last exam in college, he put it on the professor's desk, and without even getting his diploma, he jumped into his car and drove all the way out to Alaska. He didn't even wait for graduation.

So, initially, he moved to Wrangell in Southeast Alaska, and then he became director of the division of forestry for the State of Alaska—a great job, a really important job. It was a position he held until 1986, and then he formed his own timber company, which he runs today with his son.

Now, throughout all this time, John Sturgeon, like many Alaskans, loved to get out to see our great outdoors, to hunt, to fish. There was a particular area in the interior part of Alaska that he discovered that was particularly good for moose hunting. For those of you who have been up to Alaska or haven't, we have very large moose, and we have a lot of them, a lot of moose.

To get to this area, however, he had to cross a river—the Nation River, within the Yukon-Charley National Preserve, which is a preserve that was actually created by Congress. I am going to get to that. The Nation River, in a lot of areas, is very shallow. It is very shallow, so the best way to traverse the Nation River is via hovercraft. You are looking at John Sturgeon's hovercraft right there.

It was 2007, and John was in his hovercraft when the steering cable broke, and he and two friends lugged the hovercraft to a sandbar to fix the cable—just like this. This is the sandbar right here at the Nation River.

Three park rangers then showed up. We love our park rangers up in Alaska, but we also have a little more skepticism than most States about Federal agencies saying they can control what we can and can't do. John says that they were very cordial, asking all sorts of questions about hunting in the area.

He said: I just thought they were interested in the hunting. Then one of them pulled out a thick rule book.

Uh-oh. They found and pointed to a section in the rule book in which hovercrafts aren't allowed in Federal parks or preserves. They told him they were going to cite him for violating this Federal regulation if he didn't move his hovercraft.

I talked earlier about this big law, a giant law that passed in 1980. Most Alaskans didn't want it passed.

Think about this. Unfortunately, this happens a fair amount to my State. There are laws that come from the Federal Government that we don't want; yet Senators and Congressmen pass them anyway and tell Alaskans how to live their lives. That is what ANILCA did. It is a huge law.

Of course, back then, our Senators fought for provisions that protected Alaskans' interests, even though they didn't really like the law. I will talk a little later about what that law did.

John Sturgeon knew ANILCA specifically said that in Alaska—ANILCA is only about Alaska—navigable waters and submerged lands within a park or reserve were governed by State laws and regulations, not Federal laws and Federal regulations. It gets a little complicated, but Senators like Ted Stevens and Congressman YOUNG fought this bill. They said: Look, if you are going to pass it, you have to make sure things are in there to protect our citizens.

So John Sturgeon looked at these park rangers and said: Look, I am on State land and State water. You can't cite me. You shouldn't even be on these lands.

They said that it didn't matter, that they still had the authority, just as they had the authority to ban hovercrafts on all parks and preserves across the country, and they showed him this regulation book.

John Sturgeon thought they were wrong, but he moved his hovercraft anyway without getting cited. But this issue still really gnawed him. If you are being told by a Federal official to do something and you think it is wrong—well, he thought it was time to fight it.

John had personally seen when ANILCA passed—and a lot of people predicted it—this huge bill that gave so much of Alaska away to the Federal Government. Little by little, Federal agencies and Federal officials started telling Alaskans: Hey, you can't do this. You can't do that. We have authority over you on this.

It was this creeping maneuver, which we thought was ignoring provisions of ANILCA and treating the public lands in Alaska as if they were in the lower 48, but they are different. Most people who have been impacted over the years by this overreach of the Federal Government, quietly but aggressively telling Alaskans what they can and can't do according to the law, couldn't do anything about it. Going against the Federal Government—a lawsuit, for example—is time-consuming. It is expensive. As John said, "You just can't fight the beast." So most went away, and the Federal power kept creeping, creeping, and creeping.

After consulting with some lawyers about 12 years ago, John Sturgeon decided, you know what, I am going to fight this. I am going to fight it.

So guess what. He did it. He filed a suit. He lost in district court. He lost in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Trust me, I am going to talk about that court of appeals, which, unfortunately, has jurisdiction over 40 percent of the entire country and one in five Americans. They very frequently get the cases wrong. This is another great example of their completely blowing it.

It went to the U.S. Supreme Court not once but, as I said, twice. We just got the second case last week, and, boy, was it a big decision for Alaska.

That was 12 years ago. He has been fighting this for 12 years. Guess how

much it cost John Sturgeon to do this; guess why people don't do this. It took \$1.2 million in legal fees to vindicate the rights of the State of Alaska and his fellow Alaskans. Just for that reason, he should be Alaskan of the Week.

The final, unanimous decision by the Supreme Court that came down is a historic—historic—decision for the State of Alaska in favor of John Sturgeon and completely against the Park Service and the Federal Government's abuse of power.

This decision is celebrated across the great State of Alaska, and it also upheld a very important subsistence provision for Alaska Natives as well.

Every argument that the Park Service made in holding up its aggressive use of its authority over John Sturgeon "ran aground," in Justice Kagan's words. She was the author of this very important decision last week.

Let's talk a little bit about ANILCA and Justice Kagan's decision. By the way, it was a 9-to-0 decision. We always hear about the Supreme Court being divided. It was 9-zip. This is the second time this went in front of the Ninth Circuit, and the U.S. Supreme Court said: This is not hard, Ninth Circuit and Federal agents.

It was 9 to 0 in favor of John Sturgeon and the great State of Alaska.

As I mentioned, ANILCA passed here in 1980. It is a huge bill, several hundred pages. Few—even the experts—have actually read the text of ANILCA to understand why the provisions in it are so important. But to their credit, the members of the U.S. Supreme Court clearly read this statute.

As I mentioned, the decision written by Justice Kagan will serve as a guide on how lands are to be regulated by the Federal Government in Alaska according to Federal law.

In the decision, Justice Kagan begins with some history. By the way, I highly recommend that all of my fellow Alaskans read the decision. Pages, you guys should read it too. Anyone watching who cares about Alaska should read this decision. It is quite a big one.

Justice Kagan goes through great pains to try to explain a very complicated topic and writes in very plain language. It is quite a good opinion. She begins by talking about some Alaskan history.

The Federal Government, as most know, bought Alaska from Russia in 1867—365 million acres of land. That is well over the size of Texas.

Sorry, Senator CRUZ and Senator CORNYN. I know you guys like to talk about the size of Texas, but we are way, way bigger.

For the first 90 years, all of the land was owned and controlled by the Federal Government, which completely neglected the land and the people in it, who were mostly Alaska Natives.

Justice Kagan wrote in her opinion: "By the 1950s, Alaskans hankered for both statehood and land—and Congress decided to give them both."

Along with statehood came 103 million acres for the State of Alaska to

manage in order to create a tax base. The Statehood Act also gave Alaska "title to an ownership of the lands beneath the navigable waters," such as the Nation River, which is where John Sturgeon was hunting. But statehood didn't resolve all of the land disputes at all.

The Alaska Native people rightfully demanded jurisdiction over the lands that had been their ancestral lands and that they had lived on for thousands of years. So in 1971, Congress, this body, passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, which resulted in the formation of Alaska Native corporations that were able to choose up to 40 million acres of land for the Alaska Native people. That is roughly the size of Pennsylvania.

More land claims and disputes came about, given the large size of Alaska and given the different land holdings. All of this takes us to the very large statute, ANILCA, which passed here in 1980, which was at the heart of the lawsuit that we just heard about and that the Supreme Court ruled on last week.

In 1980, after a very long and contentious battle—one that resulted in protests all across Alaska, which, as Justice Kagan noted in her opinion, involved a modern-day Paul Revere galloping through crowds in Alaska, shouting "The Feds are coming! The Feds are coming!"—104 million acres of land were set aside by Congress for preservation in Alaska. Think about that.

I say to the Presiding Officer, you are from the great State of Indiana. If the Federal Government, over your objection, came and said, "We are going to take a huge chunk of Indiana, and we are going to keep it and preserve it," you probably wouldn't have voted for that.

Our Senators didn't like this, but the Congress overruled them. That happens sometimes when your State is so big. It is something we still have to focus on—when people focus on my State and want to lock it up.

So here is what they did: 104 million acres were set aside for preservation. Ten new national parks, monuments, and preserves were created, and three existing ones were expanded. These areas were called conservation units. It is essentially a national park. All of this did not come without challenges because, unlike in the lower 48, these new areas—103 million acres—that is bigger than California. It is huge. These new preservation units, conservation units, had within them private land, Native land, and State land. So it was very complicated.

These are what are called inholdings in Alaska—a patchwork of inholdings. Our Senators did a great job of saying that the inholdings can't be regulated by the Federal agencies. They are private lands; they are Alaska Native corporation lands; they are State lands, so the Feds can't regulate them. We believe that was in ANILCA. That was part of the deal, part of the settlement.

Part of the reason is that, as one writer put it, while many Americans come to Alaska to view our parks—and we are glad they do; they are beautiful—“many Alaskans think of those same parks as some combination of home, office, grocery store, and source of renewal. They have known these lands intimately, from one year to perhaps ten thousand years.”

As Justice Kagan also noted in her opinion:

[R]ivers function as the roads of Alaska. . . . Over three-quarters of Alaska's 300 communities live in regions unconnected to the State's road system.

Let me repeat that. We have over 200 communities, villages, that are not connected by roads. We need a lot more infrastructure in Alaska. So you either have to get there by taking an airplane or, in the winter, a snow machine or a boat on a river, if the village is on a river.

I am still quoting Justice Kagan. She says: “Residents of these areas include many of Alaska's poorest citizens, who rely on rivers for access to necessities like food and fuel.”

You are starting to get the picture. Our Senators fought to make sure the Federal Government couldn't regulate these areas because we need them for economic development, to get food, to hunt, and to get fuel. Slowly but surely, the Federal Government, whether Democrats or Republicans, started to say: No, no, no. We control this.

We are going to tell you Alaskans how to live your life, despite the fact that we thought ANILCA said they can't.

Congress, as I mentioned, particularly Alaska's delegation, understood that this was something they had to balance. Yes, we need to protect the lands, but at the same time—and again I am quoting Justice Kagan here—the law had to “provide adequate opportunity for satisfaction of the economic and social needs of the State of Alaska and its people.”

You can't just go to a State, over the objections of their own representatives in Congress, and say: We are going to nationalize all of this, and all of you citizens who live there, we are going to tell you what to do with your lives.

Now, this body needs to understand this because sometimes, even today, we still have issues where some of my colleagues want to lock up and shut down the great State of Alaska, and they don't take into account the people I actually represent. It is a frustration, but it is something we will continue to guard against.

Well, our Senators did a good job of guarding us in the ANILCA Act, but the Federal Government kind of ignored a lot of what was in there, and certainly the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals did.

So, as Justice Kagan put it, if you continue to read her opinion, she says: “So if . . . you see some tension within the [ANILCA] statute, you are not mistaken [when you see that tension]: It

arises from Congress's twofold ambitions [when they passed ANILCA in 1980].”

She described it as “a grand bargain,” the “Janus-faced nature in its statement of purpose, reflecting the century-long struggle over federal regulation of Alaska's resources.”

That is her quote. Here is how it was supposed to work, the twofold ambitions. It was supposed to balance the ideas of preservation of Alaska's lands with also allowing the State, not the Federal Government, to regulate those inholdings I am talking about—private land, State of Alaska land, and Native corporation land. That is what this law was reflected to do when it was written.

It can be confusing. It is a very big law, particularly for Federal employees who see it as their job to preserve and keep people out of these parks and not to—remember, you have Alaskans who have lived there for thousands of years or who had private property in there prior to this law being passed.

As Justice Kagan wrote—and here is a quote from her, which is a really important one for Alaska. She said:

If [John] Sturgeon lived in any other State, his [law]suit would not have a prayer of success. . . . Except that Sturgeon lives in Alaska. And as we—

The Supreme Court—have said before, “Alaska is often the exception, not the rule” [when it comes to these kind of Federal laws in Federal parks].

Alaska, as the Justices say over and over in this monumental decision brought down from the Supreme Court last week, is different. John Sturgeon understood this. The Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, which unfortunately handles all of the Federal appeals from Alaska district courts, does not understand this. They haven't for decades, unfortunately.

The first time John Sturgeon took this case up through the courts, he went to the Ninth Circuit, and they, of course, said: No. Sorry. Federal agents win. John Sturgeon, you lose. You now have the right to move your hovercraft on the Nation River because the Federal officials have all the power over that river.

The U.S. Supreme Court—this is about 3 years ago—actually said: No, we don't think that is the case. We are going to reverse this and send it back to the Ninth Circuit.

So what did the Ninth Circuit do? They held again that Sturgeon is going to lose. The Federal Government wins. They just came up with a different reason. I read that Ninth Circuit opinion. It was one of the most remarkable opinions I have ever read of a court of appeals—Federal court of appeals ignoring the U.S. Supreme Court. It is breathtaking how they just ignored the U.S. Supreme Court in their second opinion.

Now, sometimes the U.S. Supreme Court doesn't like to be ignored. I was a law clerk on the Ninth Circuit. I have seen them do that a lot. What did the

Supreme Court do? They essentially said: You can't ignore us. So they took it again. They took it again, and they came out with a 9-to-0 opinion. If you are a Ninth Circuit judge, you have to be embarrassed—embarrassed—because the U.S. Supreme Court took you to task. They essentially said you cannot have Federal agents in Alaska who can do whatever they believe is in their power with ignoring ANILCA. ANILCA says: “Alaskans have to be able to regulate, to use, and to control areas within these Federal preserves if they are inholdings, private land, State land, or Alaska Native corporation land.” This is something the Federal agencies have ignored and certainly the Ninth Circuit has ignored.

One of our jobs here, as you know, is to confirm judges who have been nominated. Any Ninth Circuit judge who is now coming before this body for confirmation, the first thing I am going to do is hand them this Sturgeon opinion from the U.S. Supreme Court last week and say: Read this. Read it and understand it because the Ninth Circuit has been getting the issues of Federal power over Alaska wrong for decades, and this U.S. Supreme Court decision finally sets them right—finally sets them right. This is a monumentally important decision for my State, and I believe other States, but certainly for my State.

So after a 12-year battle and after spending \$1.2 million on legal fees, our Alaskan of the Week for today, John Sturgeon, right there in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, made history—made history. A moose hunter said: I am not going to be pushed around by the Federal Government. I think I have the right to do this, and I think my State, not the Feds, controls this area of Alaska.

He was right. Despite the Federal district court telling him he was wrong and despite the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit telling him he was wrong twice, he was right. He simply wouldn't give up. Because of John Sturgeon, Alaskans will have firm ground to fight on the legal subject that comes before the courts in my State all the time in the Ninth Circuit, which is how much power the Federal Government has to control Alaskans, our economy, and our future.

As Justice Kagan wrote, in those areas, like the Nation River, [ANILCA] “makes clear, Park Service administration does not replace local [and State] control.” This body said that. Unfortunately, Federal agencies have ignored it and so has the Ninth Circuit, but now the Supreme Court has spoken and has spoken very, very definitively.

“It makes you feel patriotic,” John Sturgeon said recently when we contacted him. “One little guy from Alaska—a moose hunter—can be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court [two times]. That just blew me away.”

It does make you feel patriotic. It does make you feel that if one man thinks he is right, he can fight and win

in the courts of the United States, although it took 12 years and over a million dollars—and again, he didn't just win. He won 9 to 0—9 to 0. That is as good as it gets in the U.S. Supreme Court.

In Alaska, this man is a hero. He doesn't accept the label. He is too modest. He does acknowledge he wouldn't have gotten as far as he did without the help of some excellent attorneys, all of whom I know and have had the opportunity in my life to work with and become friends with: Matt Findley, Ruth Botstein, and Jon Katchen, who wrote an amicus brief in both hearings, including one for the congressional delegation that the U.S. Supreme Court used a lot. He also had an amazing outpouring of support from the community all over the State. People across the State of Alaska, Democrats and Republicans—it didn't matter—they knew what he was fighting for. He also had an amazing of support from the community, groups and individuals who stood with him throughout the years and who, all told, raised all but \$100,000 to pay for the legal bills.

Justice Kagan said this decision means “Sturgeon can again rev up his hovercraft in search of moose.” That is Justice Kagan in her opinion, and he is planning to do just that. He is ready. He has been working on the hovercraft. Again, there it is in the picture. It was in his garage over the past few months. It has a new engine, and he recently fired it up just like Justice Kagan told him to do, and he says it is running fine. He can't wait to get out and moose hunt.

But this story, as you probably have gathered, is bigger than one man and his moose. “Alaska is different,” John said, and, by the way, that is what the Supreme Court was saying throughout the entire opinion. “It's special. And it's meant to be that way and should be treated differently by the law. The people of Alaska truly won” in this very important case.

Thank you, John Sturgeon, for never giving up. Thank you for your hard work and your determination, and thank you for being our Alaskan of the Week. I also want to give a big thanks to our nine Justices on the Supreme Court. Justice Kagan, who wrote an exceptional decision, shows that she and the other eight Justices on the Court understand that Alaska is different, as they say probably five times in their opinion. We can love our lands, we can protect them fiercely, and we can live and play and earn a living on them as well. So for her very well-reasoned decision, maybe she should be an honorary Alaskan of the Week as well. I don't think Justice Kagan is from Alaska, though, but for today, all our thanks and praise and gratitude goes to John Sturgeon for really an incredible legal battle that is going to go down in the history books as a super-duper important day for Alaska.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING FRANK TREADWAY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today I would like to remember the life of Frank Treadway, who passed away earlier this year at the age of 96.

Born in Bell County in southeast Kentucky, Frank was one of 12 children, and much of his childhood was spent helping on the family farm in Noetown. During his teenage years, Frank worked at the Middlesboro Country Club as a golf caddy, developing a lifelong love for the game. Like so many members of the Greatest Generation, Frank proudly answered his Nation's call to service, and he enlisted in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Aboard the U.S.S. *Kyne*, Frank served throughout the Pacific. For their meritorious participation in combat, the crew received multiple commendations.

After Frank returned home from the war, Frank married the love of his life, Inez. They spent 70 years together and raised seven children. Farming remained an enduring passion, and one of Frank's proudest accomplishments was the founding and continued success of his local farm market, Treadway Gardens. Throughout his life, Frank remained loyal to his childhood home and always held the people of southeast Kentucky in high regard. Elaine and I commend this hero for his service, and we send our condolences to Inez, their children, family, and friends.

LIFESPAN RESPITE CARE REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2019

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today I wish to reaffirm my partnership on the Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act of 2019 with my good friend, Senator TAMMY BALDWIN, who I would like the record to reflect is an original lead cosponsor of S. 995. As the long-standing coauthors of this legislation, Senator BALDWIN and I have been working together to provide the necessary resources to State respite agencies to ensure that caregivers have access to the respite services they need. Following the introduction of the legislation earlier this week, we heard testimony in the Senate Special Committee on Aging that reaffirmed the importance of respite care for the millions of caregivers who are caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's and other dementias. I look forward to continuing to work with Senator BALDWIN to advance S. 995.

RECOGNIZING THE MASSACRE RIM WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I come forward today to recognize the Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area's designation as an International Dark Sky Sanctuary. Located 150 miles north of Reno in Washoe County, NV, Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area is a region with rolling hills, buttes, plateaus, and narrow canyons, covered in sagebrush and junipers. Massacre Rim is a natural, undisturbed, and isolated environment that offers visitors rare opportunities to enjoy scenic vistas of up to 60 miles, as well as solitude away from development and distraction. Thanks to the location's remoteness, Massacre Rim's night views are completely uninhibited by light pollution. These unique qualities allow for nearly unparalleled stargazing, which has attracted visitors from around the world.

On March 30, 2019, the International Dark-Sky Association designated the Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area as an International Dark Sky Sanctuary, only the fourth location to achieve this distinction in the United States and the seventh in the entire world. The International Dark-Sky Association deemed Massacre Rim worthy of this honor due to its qualifications as “land that has an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is protected for its scientific, natural, or educational value, its cultural heritage and/or public enjoyment.”

For most of human history, a night sky teeming with stars and shooting comets was a regular occurrence for our ancestors. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, one could look to the sky and find awe-inspiring wonder, intrigue, and entertainment. For most of us, that is no longer the case. According to a 2016 National Geographic article, 80 percent of Americans cannot see the Milky Way due to light pollution. While light pollution is a necessary and small consequence to our growth and development as a society, it is imperative that we recognize the significant value in our increasingly rare dark sky places, such as Massacre Rim. Fortunately, for visitors and residents of the great State of Nevada, views of both the Milky Way and our neighboring galaxy, Andromeda, are available at Massacre Rim.

Our State's booming outdoor recreation economy is a testament to the success of our public lands and highlights the importance of keeping our invaluable natural resources available for all to utilize and enjoy. I commend the nonprofit organization, Friends of Nevada Wilderness, for spearheading the Massacre Rim Wilderness Study Area's Dark Sky Sanctuary designation, and for continuing to educate others about the natural wonders available in the Silver State.

From Massacre Rim, to the Lake Tahoe Basin, to the Ruby Mountains, residents and visitors can attest that