



THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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Dear Member of Congress:

Recently, The Wildlife Society joined over 2,000 other organizations from all 50 states in signing a letter opposing the federal travel amendment restrictions included as part of the DATA Act (H.R. 2146). You can view the letter at www.asaecenter.org/MeetingsLetter2012. The Wildlife Society was founded in 1937 and is a non-profit scientific and educational association of over 11,000 professional wildlife biologists and managers, dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our mission is to represent and serve the professional community of scientists, managers, educators, technicians, planners, and others who work actively to study, manage, and conserve wildlife and its habitats worldwide.

The amendment in question was portrayed in the media as restricting wasteful government spending, but would actually go far beyond that. In fact, the language would essentially limit federal agency personnel from attending more than one meeting held by an organization (either for-profit or not-for-profit) if there is any agency travel expense. This would have a hugely detrimental effect on meetings held by professional societies such as The Wildlife Society.

Scientific and professional organizations play many important roles in our society, including sharing information through scientific and popular publications, facilitation of expert networks, providing an independent and science-based perspective on relevant government policies, and professional development and certification programs. The meetings held by these organizations provide venues for members and other to come together face-to-face to network and share their knowledge. Most professional societies have annual conferences every year, as do their subunits, such as local chapters or subject matter-based working groups. Offering practical workshops, concurrent sessions featuring the latest research, and numerous social activities that provide opportunities for networking and mentoring, conferences and meetings are a vital way for professional societies to help connect research with on-the-ground management.

Full participation in professional societies is an important part of a scientist's or natural resource manager's career and professional development. Curtailing this involvement is detrimental to the federal agencies that employ scientists, in part because it will prevent the employee from achieving professional stature, thus dissuading the best scientists from entering federal service. It may distance the scientist or natural resource manager from the full interchange of information and ideas that are so vital to keeping current in the field and providing the best scientific or professional advice to the agency.

We urge you to amend the provisions, using the suggested language in the letter referenced above. If you have any questions, please contact Laura Bies, TWS Director of Government Affairs at 301.897.9770 or laura@wildlife.org.

Sincerely,

Paul R. Krausman, CWB
President