



July 26, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Granger and Ranking Member DeLauro,

The Aerospace Industries Association (AIA), representing over 320 American aerospace manufacturers, suppliers, and more than 2 million U.S. workers, writes to express concern over Sec. 466 in the recently approved Fiscal Year 2024 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill. This provision would withhold funding to support Public Land Order No. 7921, that withdraws public land for satellite calibration in Railroad Valley, Nevada. Similarly, AIA opposes standalone bill H.R. 3883, the legislation “to nullify Public Land Order No. 7921, withdrawing certain land in the Railroad Valley of Nye County, Nevada, from mineral entry,” which would similarly affect NASA’s operations.

AIA and its members strongly oppose changes to the Railroad Valley site (RRV). This area is a unique critical asset to the U.S. as it is the only site in the U.S. utilized by the commercial remote sensing industry to calibrate satellite measurements and data. This calibration process is essential for Earth observing satellite systems, including systems utilized by NASA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the United States Geological Survey (USGS), and the U.S. military. U.S. remote sensing capabilities rely on this site to provide essential data for accurate weather observations and applications for severe weather, fire, pollution, public health, and land management. Alterations to the site’s surface would destroy the natural characteristics necessary for these calibrations, harming our scientific pursuits, national security, and economic competitiveness.

NASA and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have worked together since 2018 to decide the appropriate course of action for maintaining the RRV site for satellite calibration, resulting in the process that led to BLM approving NASA’s land withdrawal application in April.¹ Furthermore, there are no substitute sites of the same qualities in the U.S. or readily accessible abroad. NASA has analyzed locations across the U.S., none meeting the standards for appropriate calibration. The attached document from NASA further details its criticality.

AIA urges this committee to reconsider Sec. 466 when this bill comes to the floor and support preserving the critical Railroad Valley site. Doing so will ensure the site stability for use by the remote sensing community for essential satellite systems.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these inputs, and we look forward to working with you on this important legislation. Please reach out if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike French". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mike French
Vice President, Space Systems
Aerospace Industries Association

¹ “Nearly 23,000 Acres Designated for NASA Satellite Calibration.” NASA, 26 Apr. 2023, www.nasa.gov/feature/nearly-23000-acres-designated-for-nasa-satellite-calibration/.

CC: The Honorable Mike Simpson, Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Chellie Pingree, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Susan Collins, Vice-Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations