



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0916**

August 26, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt  
Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Wilbur Ross  
Secretary  
Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretaries Bernhardt and Ross,

I am writing today to urge you to reconsider the Interior and Commerce Department's ill-advised proposal to eliminate key protections established by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The more than 45-year-old law is the gold standard for conservation and the protection of wildlife.

This landmark law has been essential to safeguarding our most vulnerable wildlife, which includes the American bald eagle, the California condor and the Florida manatee. Since being enacted, the ESA has been so successful that 99 percent of the species placed under its purview have been saved from extinction.

The new regulations will make it easier to remove an endangered species from key protections as well as place threatened species at greater risk of becoming extinct. Not affording threatened species the same protections as endangered species, and instead determining their protections on a "case by case basis" places these animals at risk and undermines the chances of helping the species recover.

The proposed rule would also make it more difficult to protect the critical habitats where these vulnerable animals live. It would be unconscionable to weaken the very safeguards that have kept these animals alive for nearly half a century, especially in the wake of a recent UN report showing that one million species of wildlife and plants are now threatened with extinction across the globe.

Noah Greenwald, the endangered species director at the Center for Biological Diversity warned that, "these changes crash a bulldozer through the Endangered Species Act's lifesaving protections for America's most vulnerable wildlife."

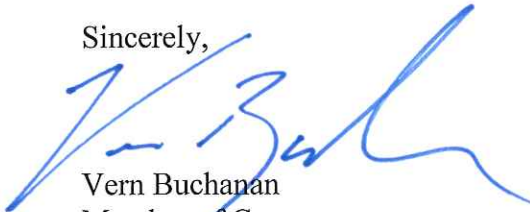
The case of the iconic Florida Panther, one of world's rarest cats, is currently undergoing a mandatory five-year review. If the Fish and Wildlife Service chooses to downgrade the panther

from endangered to threatened, despite my strong opposition, it could be subject to this new rule and lose many of the vital protections it needs to survive.

Once a species becomes extinct, it is forever lost. We have a duty as the caretakers of our nation's natural resources to preserve the wild species that call our country home. The proposed rulemaking goes directly against this responsibility.

I look forward to your prompt response on this vitally important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Vern Buchanan", is written over the typed name and title.

Vern Buchanan  
Member of Congress