

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

August 10, 2004

The Honorable Gale Norton
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Madam Secretary:

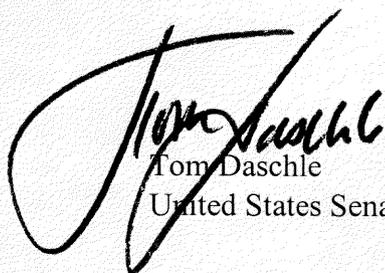
We are writing to inquire about the status of the Department of the Interior's review of the black-tailed prairie dog. As you know, in May, your Department promised to make a decision by August on whether to remove the prairie dog from the candidate list of the Endangered Species Act. We believe any delay in making a determination to remove the prairie dog will have significant consequences for land managers and property owners in South Dakota. Therefore, we believe it is critical for you to act as quickly as possible.

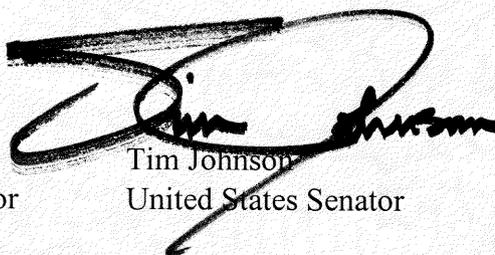
The scientific evidence continues to show that prairie dogs are far from threatened. Armed with new populations estimates, the state of South Dakota is in the process of finalizing a prairie dog management plan to better control and monitor the species. This plan has received numerous comments in the last several months from ranchers and land owners, who all highlight the growing problems created by prairie dog colonies in our state. This problem is made worse by the severe drought affecting much of our state. As you may know, prairie dogs expand more widely and rapidly in drought years than in wet years.

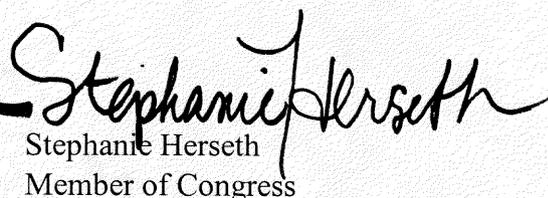
The continued presence of the prairie dog on the candidate list limits effective state and federal management of prairie dogs. As we travel the state, landowner impacts and loss of grazing land are seriously affecting the quality of life in western South Dakota. The quickest and simplest way to resolve this is for the prairie dog to be removed from the candidate list immediately. We urge you to issue a decision on this matter soon.

Thank you again for your consideration of and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


Tom Daschle
United States Senator


Tim Johnson
United States Senator


Stephanie Herseth
Member of Congress