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Amodei, Jewell in lively feud over sage grouse

A look at Nevada politics by the staff of the Las Vegas Review-Journal and Stephens Media Washington Bureau. The Political Eye is also on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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U.S. Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Nev., and Interior Secretary Sally Jewell have a pretty lively feud going over the sage grouse.

The Obama administration is stewing over a rider Amodei stuck onto the year-end government spending bill that prohibits the Fish and Wildlife Service from meeting a September 2015 deadline to finalize rules listing the chicken-sized desert bird as endangered or threatened.

Amodei, from Carson City, says he doesn't believe the administration is doing enough to avoid a listing, which could wall off tracts of land across the West and disrupt ranchers, miners and others who make a living off the range. Conservationists say the process is working just as it should.

Faced with the restriction, Interior officials said they will do everything short of putting sage grouse regulations into effect. They will continue to work with governors of Western states to find ways to protect habitat for the bird while collecting data to support a final decision.

Then Jewell cranked it up a bit.

"It's disappointing that some members of Congress are more interested in political posturing than finding solutions to conserve the sagebrush landscape and the Western way of life," she said in a statement. "Rather than helping the communities they profess to benefit, these members will only create uncertainty, encourage conflict and undermine the unprecedented progress that is happening throughout the West."

Amodei was not happy. According to aides, he was further irritated because the secretary's statement was issued to the media four hours before a copy was sent to him.

Amodei: "The resort to shallow political attacks does not hide the fact Ms. Jewell's department chose, through budgetary inaction, not to make any attempt to avoid an endangered species listing.

"I look forward to an in-depth discussion on the issue to start the 114th Congress, instead of CYA news releases issued when nobody is in town," Amodei said. CYA is an acronym for "Cover Your (Backside)."

The Nevada Republican said he hoped Jewell would reconsider her "incendiary" communications strategy.

“There are a lot of great people working very hard on the sage hen issue in the West, and Interior needs to show some respect to them instead of defaulting to tired political agendas,” he said.

— Steve Tetreault