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I'm writing to urge Washington to maintain endangered species protections for wolves in your state. Although you stated the number of wolves has been slowly increasing in Washington for 10 years, the current population of this predator (about 125) is still below the historical number. This population and lack of breeding has not met the standard set in your Wolf Conservation and Management Plan for removal of protections for wolves.

Wolves are vital components of healthy ecosystems. Unlike human hunters, wolves tend to cull the weaker members of their prey species, thus maintaining the long-term genetic health of those animals. Since wolves also prey primarily on herbivores, they limit the over-browsing of native vegetation. For instance, when wolves disappeared from Isle Royale on Lake Superior here in the Upper Great Lakes, the moose population exploded and severely over-browsed vegetation.

Considering these facts and the long-term benefit of these predators, I was disappointed to read Washington is planning to remove endangered species protections for wolves in your state. It seems input from wealthy ranchers who hate wolves has been instrumental in pushing your decision to delist these important predators. In fact, ranchers can take relatively simple actions like using dogs and fencing to protect their cattle and other livestock. And according to public opinion surveys, the great majority of your state's residents support the presence of wolves.

Clearly, a healthy wolf population will bring many benefits to Washington. Please cancel plans to remove endangered species protections for these animals in your state. Thank you.