

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2019

Acting Secretary Bernhardt
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Acting Secretary Bernhardt:

For more than a century, the Antiquities Act has empowered presidents from both political parties to protect and preserve iconic landscapes and vulnerable cultural treasures across the country. As the President's nominee to serve as the 53rd Secretary of the Interior, we write to request that you take action to protect many of these landscapes by making a public commitment to leave all existing national monument boundaries intact and ensure they are managed consistent with their original proclamations.

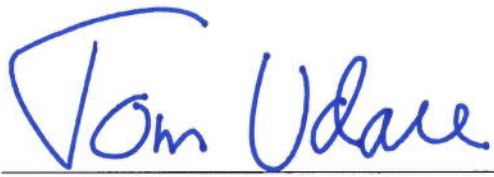
Specifically, we urge you to officially rescind recommendations that former Secretary Zinke made to President Trump as part of his ill-conceived national monuments review, and to announce that the Department will forego any additional actions to implement the recommendations included in Secretary Zinke's "Final Report Summarizing Findings of the Review of Designations Under the Antiquities Act" released in December 2017. We also request that you make a clear commitment that the Department will not rewrite monument management plans in any manner that is inconsistent with the intent of the original proclamations, particularly in light of pending legal challenges to the elimination of national monument protections in Utah.

We strongly believe that these actions would be in the best interest of the American public, who overwhelmingly support the protection and preservation of these lands. Outside analysis determined that 99 percent of the more than three million public comments received by the Department during the review process opposed any changes to national monument designations. In addition, many of the local communities we represent depend on national monuments to protect their heritage, fuel their local economies and improve their quality of life. They have been living in fear that the Administration will take additional steps to diminish these monuments since this report was issued, and we hope you can finally put their—and our—minds at ease.

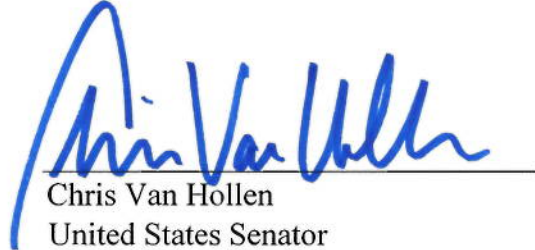
These actions would be also an important signal that, if confirmed, you intend to comply with the Antiquities Act and respect the fundamental separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches of government. Such a signal would be especially important given that numerous legal experts have concluded that the President Trump lacked the authority to revoke or diminish a national monument designation. We note that following the President's decision to act on former Secretary Zinke's unprecedented recommendations to eliminate more than two million acres of Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments, five lawsuits have been filed challenging those illegal actions led by a diverse coalition of plaintiffs, including Native American Tribes, scientific groups, businesses and conservation organizations. They have been joined by 118 Members of Congress, including many of us, who have filed an *amicus* brief in support of these legal challenges out of concern that the President's actions on these proclamations amount to executive overreach.

In light of the importance of these monuments to our constituents, Native American Tribes, and the American public at large, we urge you to take these actions to protect some of our most spectacular wilderness and breathtaking lands – what President Teddy Roosevelt called “the most glorious heritage a people ever received.” We respectfully request that you provide the courtesy of a reply before the Senate considers your nomination. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



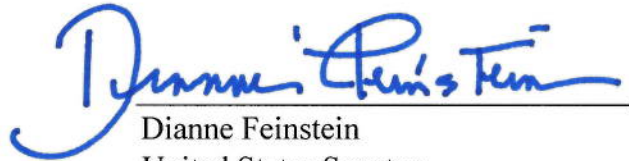
Tom Udall
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



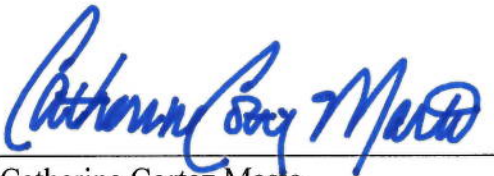
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



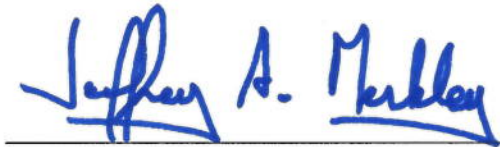
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
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