

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 16, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators McConnell and Schumer,

As members of the Senate Western Caucus, we urge you to continue to prioritize executive nominations important to the west. Specifically, we would like to bring to your attention four more well-qualified nominees to the Department of the Interior (DOI), reported favorably out of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources by a voice vote, and ask that you promptly confirm them.

1. President Trump nominated Joseph Balash, a native of North Pole, Alaska, to be Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management on July 25, 2017. Prior to Mr. Balash's service as Chief of Staff to Senator Dan Sullivan (AK), he was Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, which has jurisdiction over more than 140 million acres of upland and submerged lands, containing some of the nation's most critical energy and mineral resources. Mr. Balash's western state-based experience as Commissioner and his federal experience in the Senate makes him uniquely qualified for this position at a time when responsibly developing our nation's resources and creating jobs are among our highest priorities. His nomination has been pending for 114 days, longer than his predecessors in the past 25 years.
2. Susan Combs, a rancher from Big Bend, Texas, was nominated to be Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget on July 11, 2017. Ms. Combs has had a long and successful career both in business and in public service, including as a member of the Texas House of Representatives, as Texas' Agricultural Commissioner, and as Texas' Comptroller of Public Accounts. In her time as Comptroller, she successfully managed complex tax issues and streamlined bureaucracy to make it both more efficient and more accountable to taxpayers. Her proven management track record in the public and private sectors is crucial to making DOI more efficient and effective and helping ensure responsible stewardship of western lands. Her nomination has been pending for 128 days, longer than her predecessors in the past 25 years.
3. Ryan Nelson, a native of Idaho Falls, Idaho, was nominated to be Solicitor of DOI on August 2, 2017. Mr. Nelson has a breadth of experience in the public sector, having worked in all three branches of the federal government. He clerked on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit and served as Special Counsel for the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, as well as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division. His litigation and regulatory background on these issues that are of the highest importance to western states makes

him ideally suited to DOI and he should be confirmed at once. His nomination has been pending for 106 days, longer than his predecessors in the past 25 years.

4. Brenda Burman of Arizona was nominated by the President to be Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) on June 29, 2017. Ms. Burman has in-depth experience in water issues that are important to western states, having previously served as the BOR Deputy Commissioner and DOI Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science under President George W. Bush. In addition to her government experience, Ms. Burman worked in the private sector in a number of western states, gaining first-hand experience in the challenges we face. Her background makes her an outstanding candidate to lead BOR in working collaboratively to tackle the complex water issues that face western states and she should be confirmed as soon as possible. If confirmed, Ms. Burman will be the first woman to lead the Bureau. Her nomination has been pending for 140 days, nearly 100 days longer than her predecessors within the past 25 years.

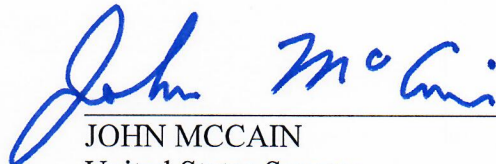
We urge you to make these well-qualified nominees a top priority for confirmation. A fully staffed DOI is essential to implementing the Senate's bipartisan objectives for responsible energy and natural resource development, stewardship of our public lands, and creating good-paying jobs that will benefit not only western states, but the U.S. economy as a whole.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to working with you to further address initiatives important to the west.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES
United States Senator



JOHN MCCAIN
United States Senator



JEFF FLAKE
United States Senator



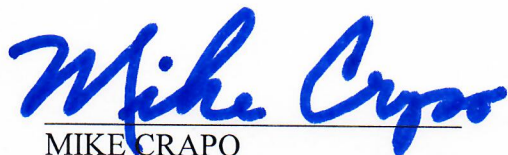
LISA MURKOWSKI
United States Senator



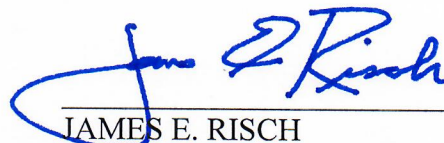
DAN SULLIVAN
United States Senator



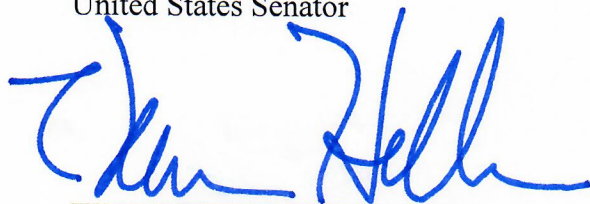
MICHAEL B. ENZI
United States Senator



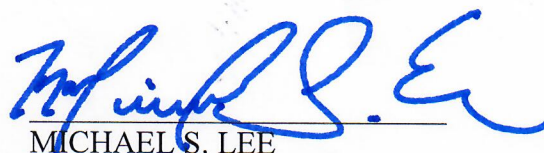
MIKE CRAPO
United States Senator



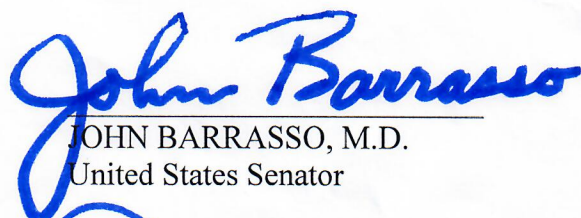
JAMES E. RISCH
United States Senator



DEAN HELLER
United States Senator



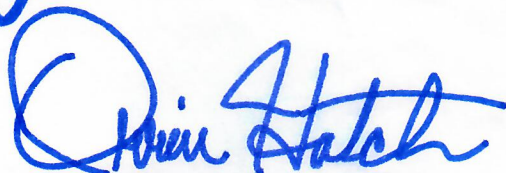
MICHAEL S. LEE
United States Senator



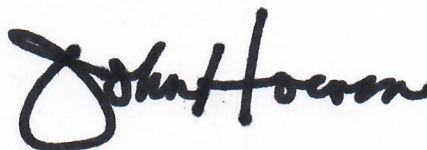
JOHN BARRASSO, M.D.
United States Senator



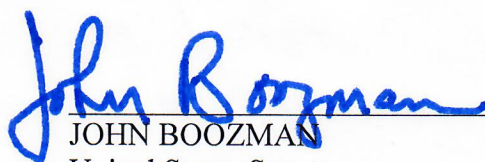
CORY GARDNER
United States Senator



ORRIN HATCH
United States Senator



JOHN HOEVEN
United States Senator



JOHN BOOZMAN
United States Senator



BILL CASSIDY, M.D.
United States Senator