

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 5, 2020

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to ask you for two things: (1) your administration's support and cooperation in seeking a permanent, legislative solution to the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments in Utah, supported by a broad group of stakeholders, including elected officials, tribal governments, and other groups with interest in the management of these lands; and (2) an extension on the 60-day timeline you outlined in your Executive Order calling for a review of the monuments so as to allow the Secretary of the Interior to travel to Utah, tour the monuments in question, and get meaningful input from the local elected officials and residents who may otherwise be unheard.

In our letter to you, dated February 17, 2021, we indicated our readiness to engage as your Administration considers actions on the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments. We again write to you today to reaffirm that readiness and request to meet with you directly, to discuss a legislative solution to codify appropriate boundaries to these national monuments and statutory protections from abuses under the Antiquities Act in the State of Utah. As demonstrated by the aforementioned letter, which was also signed by Utah's Governor, Lieutenant Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, and Attorney General, there is widespread support for congressional action. We call upon you, and your administration, to support and engage in finding a long-term legislative solution and stop the vacillation of national monument boundaries in Utah. Various tribal leaders, environmental organizations, and Democratic members of Congress have expressed the need for permanent congressional legislation to protect this area. We remain prepared to work in good faith and hope you do as well.

A solution enacted by Congress could yield better results for all interested parties. The executive actions creating the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments did not effectively protect sensitive cultural resources or provide certainty in management of the lands.

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Further unilateral, executive action under the Antiquities Act will result in the same shortcomings. We would much prefer a legislative solution. A legislative approach – if pursued with the support of the Utah delegation – would serve both the nation and our constituents. If successful, such an effort could help us end this historic cycle of disputes.

During the hearing regarding her pending nomination to be Secretary of the Interior, Representative Haaland committed to Senator Lee to come to Utah to meet and speak with those who are impacted by the monument designations and who understand the issue best. Unfortunately, time is running short to fulfil this commitment.

In your executive order, dated January 20, 2021, referred to as *Executive Order on Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis*, you directed your Secretary of the Interior to conduct a review of “the monument boundaries and conditions that were established by Proclamation 9681 of December 4, 2017 (Modifying the Bears Ears National Monument),” and “Proclamation 9682 of December 4, 2017 (Modifying the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument),” as appropriate and consistent with applicable law, including the Antiquities Act, 54 U.S.C. 320301 *et seq.* This review is to be conducted within 60 days of the date of your order. That date is quickly approaching, and we believe it would be premature to have the Department of the Interior make a recommendation on the scope of these monuments without the process being overseen by a Senate-confirmed Secretary.

If the timeline is not extended, Representative Haaland, if confirmed, may have only days to consider the recommendations of the Department of the Interior, which she would then transmit to you, almost certainly eliminating the possibility for her to travel to Utah and meet with stakeholders who may otherwise be unheard. This recommendation, which could change the fate of millions of acres of land in Utah and uproot entire economies, is hardly a matter that can be decided in such a short period of time. This is especially true if the Secretary is unable to fulfil her commitment prior to issuing the review containing recommendations for action.

In summary, we ask to meet with you to begin the process of finding a legislative solution and to extend the date by which this review is to be completed in order to appropriately engage with those impacted. We are confident that your administration can achieve a better, and possibly historic result, with substantive input and engagement from Utah’s stakeholders. Furthermore, if a review is transmitted to you by the Department of the Interior prior to the confirmation of a Senate-confirmed Secretary, our state could be deprived of meaningful opportunities to engage with the Department’s senior-most official on this most pressing issue.

Thank you for your consideration. We appreciate and await your prompt response.

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Sincerely,



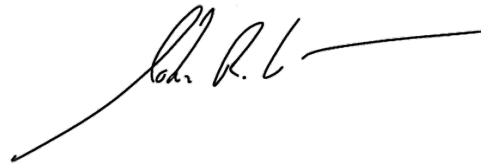
Michael S. Lee
United States Senator



Mitt Romney
United States Senator



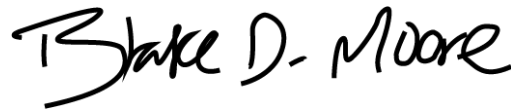
Chris Stewart
United States Representative



John Curtis
United States Representative



Burgess Owens
United States Representative



Blake Moore
United States Representative

Cc: Acting Director Scott de la Vega
Department of Interior
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Washington, D.C. 20242