



January 16, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell:

Western Energy Alliance strongly supports the confirmation of Congressman Ryan Zinke as Secretary of the Interior. As a Westerner representing a state with a large portion of federal public lands, Congressman Zinke understands the complexity of public lands issues and how the Interior Department impacts rural communities and economic growth on a daily basis.

Western Energy Alliance represents over 300 companies engaged in all aspects of environmentally responsible exploration and production of oil and natural gas in the West. Alliance members are independents, the majority of which are small businesses with an average of fifteen employees. Our members produce energy from federal public lands throughout the West, and the Alliance speaks for the industry on crucial issues regarding public lands and their stewardship. Our members are deeply affected by the decisions of the Secretary of the Interior.

President-Elect Trump has made it clear that American energy development will be an important focus of his administration. Western producers with reasonable access to federal public lands can help him create hundreds of thousands of high-paying blue-collar jobs. Congressman Zinke is the right person to enact this vision while protecting the landscapes that all Westerners love and cherish. He understands that responsible energy development in Montana and across the West is a vital economic engine that can be balanced with environmental protection.

Of course there are lands in the West that are suitable for preservation only, such as our national parks and wilderness areas. But the majority of public lands are working landscapes suitable for ranching, farming, mining, energy development and other productive uses. These lands have supported individual livelihoods and rural communities for generations. Productive users of multiple-use lands like energy companies work hard to

protect these landscapes so that sportsmen, hikers, and other recreational users can enjoy the lands as well.

On the other hand, the environmental lobby continually tries to lock away these lands from productive uses. Radical activists that want no oil and natural gas development offer the public a false choice between economic prosperity and protection of the land. They ignore the fact that oil and natural gas production leaves a small and temporary impact, and that companies reclaim the land to previous or even better conditions. Lands are reclaimed so successfully that many areas with prior and even active oil and natural gas activity are regularly proposed for wilderness designation in recognition of their pristine condition.

Congressman Zinke can restore balance to federal lands management and navigate these complex issues. He is a strong leader who should be quickly confirmed as our next Secretary of the Interior.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Sgamma', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kathleen M. Sgamma
President