

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4707

May 24, 2017

Ryan Zinke, Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

The president's decision to sign the Executive Order on the Review of Designations Under the Antiquities Act, which directs you to review and make recommendations about national monuments designated since 1996, is a continuation of this administration's wholesale assault on who we are as Americans and what we cherish in our country.

As you know, the executive branch has no authority to revoke national monument designations. As the 1976 Federal Land Policy and Management Act made clear, it also lacks the ability to shrink those monuments. Even so, your recommendations will inform and powerfully shape discussions about the disposition of our monuments and public lands more generally. We strongly urge you, in crafting those recommendations, to remember the irreplaceable role that these monuments play in our national life and culture. Any reduction in their size would be unacceptable, and their elimination would be unprecedented.

Our national monuments are designated to protect our environment and honor the diverse people and places that have made significant impacts on our communities and country. Under the Antiquities Act, important places ranging from Devil's Tower in California to Hanford Reach in Washington to Fort Monroe in Virginia have been designated as national monuments.

Bears Ears in Utah has been a topic of discussion since former President Barack Obama made it his final national monument before leaving office. It has a rich history, and its designation as a national monument under the Antiquities Act protects more than 100,000 archaeological sites, ancient artworks, burial sites, and locations of cultural significance to Native Americans. Every one of those sites deserves protection and any effort to weaken their current protections would be unconscionable.

The White House has clearly targeted large monuments, but the review requirement also contemplates monuments "where the Secretary determines that the designation or expansion was made without adequate public outreach and coordination with relevant stakeholders." We urge you to resist any temptation to use such vague and subjective criteria to review smaller, culturally essential monuments that clearly deserve their current protections.

For example, Stonewall Inn was designated a national monument in 2016. It has a deep connection to the history of the LGBTQ rights movement in the United States, serving as the site of the Stonewall uprising and a pillar of resistance in the struggle for equality for LGBTQ people. Revoking its status would be a grave demonstration of this administration's lack of respect for the LGBTQ community, and the extensive public process that took place in New York.

To remove protections for even just pieces of these national monuments would be culturally insensitive and disrespectful. It would set us back in the progress we have made in recognizing the impact and importance of certain cultural traditions and natural sites around our country.

In addition to these cultural consequences, reducing or eliminating monuments would be bad for the environment. What we have seen to date is that this administration has shown little commitment to land conservation and the critically important fight against climate change. Any effort to undo the progress achieved in protecting important ecological sites is unacceptable.

By removing protections of these lands, efforts to exploit them for fossil fuels and minerals would undoubtedly pick up dramatically. The cultural history of these places is worth much more than the energy resources underneath their soil, and these lands are irreplaceable.

We are also troubled by the Trump administration's close ties to oil and gas companies and big business, and worry that this order may become part of a broader pattern of profiting off of public lands. It is clear that the president has no qualms about using his position to benefit the Trump Organization and its properties; his failure to disclose financial information makes it impossible to know whether he stands to personally profit from projects like the Dakota Access Pipeline. Public lands are for the people, not for exploitation by their leaders.

Secretary Zinke, you have a reputation for being an outdoors enthusiast in your home state. Montana's Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument will be under your review, and we urge you to support continued protections for every acre of that monument, as well as all others.

Sincerely,



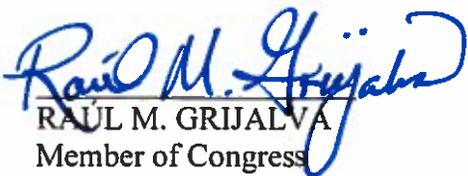
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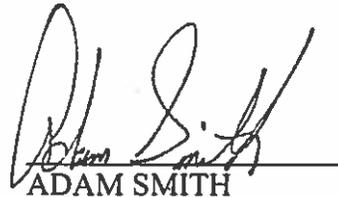
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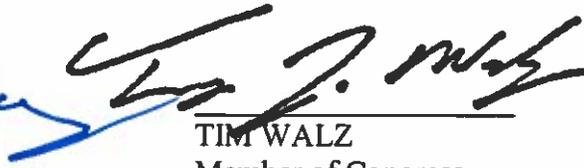
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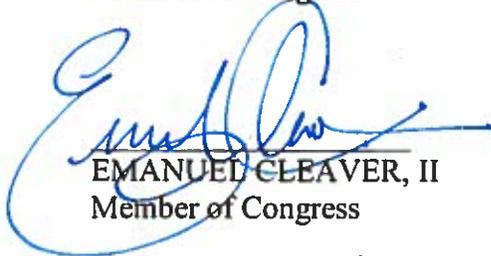
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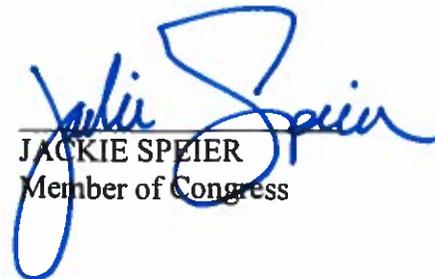
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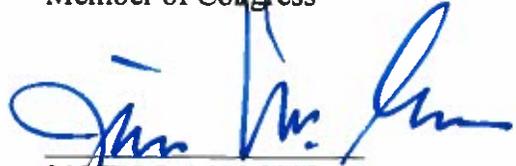
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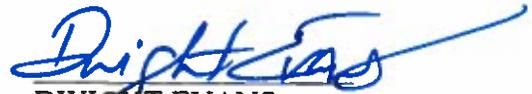
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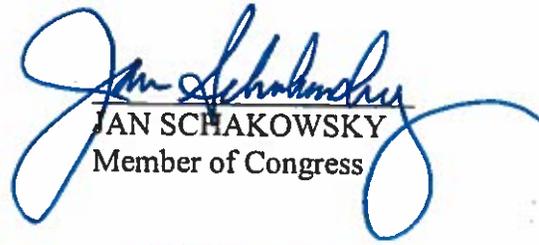
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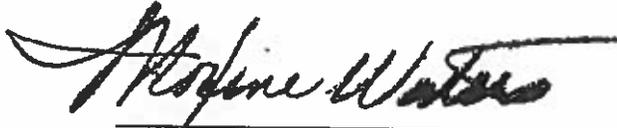
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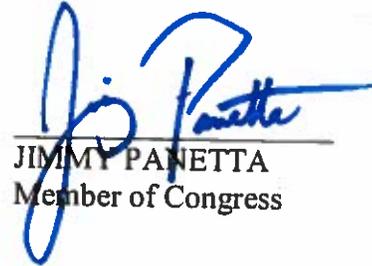

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