

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

June 12, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

As Chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources, I write to express concern regarding the number of vacant high-priority leadership roles within the Department of the Interior (DOI).

Fifty-nine percent of key DOI positions have yet to be filled; fewer than half of those vacant even have a nominee awaiting Senate approval. These vacancies encompass a wide range of critical DOI Bureaus and Offices at the cornerstone of our nation's public lands, indigenous heritage, and natural resource management, including:

- Deputy Secretary of the Interior
- Special Trustee for American Indians
- Director for the National Park Service
- Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE)
- Director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)

While campaigning for President, you professed your ability to hire “the best” individuals to lead our country's most vital institutions. Yet, the turnover rate for Cabinet and agency leaders in this Administration is double that of the last three Presidents. Your first DOI Secretary resigned under a cloud of scandal and still has several outstanding investigations. Meanwhile, your Administration is abdicating its constitutional duty to nominate qualified individuals into these important roles, instead enlisting individuals in “acting capacity” who are more loyal to a political agenda than the missions of the agencies and departments they should be leading.

You have not nominated a Deputy Secretary of the Interior. This position supports the Secretary in overseeing more than two billion acres of ocean, public lands, national parks,

wildlife refuges, and endangered species habitats, along with the historic and cultural resources of this nation.

You have not nominated someone for Special Trustee for American Indians. The Office of the Special Trustee prepares financial statements for the Indian trust funds, provides vital appraisals of land and land interests, and supports the Secretary of the Interior in meeting the federal government's trust responsibilities owed to indigenous peoples and tribes.

You have not offered a nominee for National Park Service Director. This position serves an essential role in leading the National Park Service employees who protect, preserve, and share America's 419 National Park System areas with the American people. The Director and their office are tasked with managing cherished programs that help communities across the nation preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities.

You have not named a nominee for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages habitats important for biodiversity and public enjoyment. Under your Administration, the agency has slowed its consideration of listing species as endangered and is pursuing other sweeping policy changes to implementing key laws such as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Endangered Species Act — without an agency leader to oversee these shifts in policy.

You have not nominated someone for BLM Director. BLM manages nearly 250 million acres of U.S. land directly and roughly 700 million acres of subsurface minerals. BLM's purview includes all oil, gas, and coal on public lands and in national forests.

There is no nominee for Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE). OSMRE oversees all coal mining in the nation and provides hundreds of millions of dollars in grants each year to states to enable the cleanup of abandoned coal mines. The lack of a nominee for the position is in stark contrast to your repeated promises to coal country.

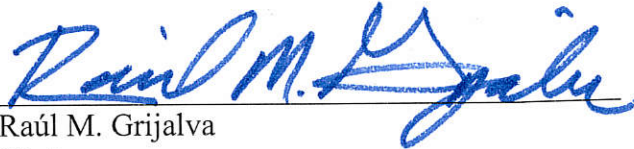
You have not appointed a Director to lead the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). BOEM's important work includes reviewing seismic permits for the Atlantic, and the Bureau was until very recently working on a new offshore oil and gas leasing program that would open both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts to offshore leasing and drilling. The BOEM Director does not even require Senate confirmation — yet you have not named anyone to the position.

Deferring top leadership positions to individuals in acting capacity harms our constitutional system of checks and balances by removing the Senate's ability to properly vet and confirm official nominees. Lack of leadership breeds confusion from career employees, which corrodes morale, furthers inefficiency, and hinders our government's ability to deliver the public services Americans deserve.

Permanently filling Department leadership roles gives officials and their employees the incentive and the tenure-based credibility to engage in long-term planning, self-examination, and improvements for the Bureaus and Offices based on experience. Permanence also sends a clear signal that the Department and its missions are priorities for your Administration.

To address these issues and expedite the nomination process, the Committee requests that the Administration produce a detailed timeline of nominations for all Department positions that are currently vacant or held by an individual in acting capacity. You may contact the Committee on Natural Resources staff about this request at (202) 225-6065.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva

Chair

Committee on Natural Resources