



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

FEB - 2 2024

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Westerman:

This letter responds to your October 23, 2023, letter addressed to Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and the Department of the Interior's Designated Agency Ethics Official and Director of the Departmental Ethics Office (DEO) Heather Gottry, which was cosigned by Representative Paul Gosar, Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, that seeks additional documents and information related to ethics compliance at the Department.

In August 2023, the Department provided both a written response and, under separate cover, documents that were responsive to your initial June 5, 2023, request in this matter. The Department has not identified any further materials that were responsive to the Committee's previous requests from that time. As discussed below, with this letter we are providing the Committee with documents responsive to this new request. In addition, we are continuing to search for potentially responsive material.

At the outset, we note that your October letter makes a number of assertions about the Pueblo Action Alliance (PAA). The Department cannot speak to these claims, but we do voice overall support for Americans' First Amendment rights to participate in public debate, civic life, and to petition their government. This letter responds to the statements and requests by the Committee regarding matters most related to the Department's responsibilities.

In doing so, we found several incorrect or inaccurate characterizations in your letter. From the first days of her nomination to be Secretary, Secretary Haaland has made clear her commitment to leading the Department ethically and with honor and integrity. As one of her first acts, Secretary Haaland sent a message to all Departmental employees highlighting her participation in ethics training and encouraging Department employees to consult with the DEO on their ethics obligations.

As a Senate-confirmed official, Secretary Haaland has fully committed to following all applicable ethics laws, regulations, and the ethics pledge. She has actively sought and consulted with the DEO for ethics advice and has put in place a robust screening process to help ensure that she does not participate in matters relating to any of the individuals or entities listed in her Ethics Recusals & Screening Arrangement. The Department's August 2023 Response to your earlier letter laid out the relevant ethics guidelines and process that the Secretary continues to follow. As of this date, Secretary Haaland has neither sought nor been granted any waivers of her ethics obligations.

The Department's review of scheduling to date indicates only a few limited engagements relevant to your questions. In one case, Secretary Haaland provided pre-recorded remarks at a virtual event where several hundred people were invited, including a member of PAA. The Department was not made aware of the event's final attendee list and cannot confirm if the individual attended virtually. In another case, a member of PAA was one of approximately 15 individuals invited to attend an Environmental Justice roundtable in 2022 in the State of New Mexico where Secretary Haaland was a virtual participant due to COVID. The individual from PAA did not attend the event. Documents regarding these engagements are included in the production accompanying this letter.

Other encounters with the PAA, such as the ones cited in your letter, include ceremonial and large group events such as the Secretary's swearing in as the first Native American cabinet Secretary, the delivery of a totem pole by Native groups to the Department, and in her congressional office before she was confirmed as Secretary of the Interior. Along with many other attendees, PAA members also joined widely attended events that the Secretary participated in regarding conservation of landscape around Chaco Canyon Historical Park.

Regarding the film featuring Chaco Canyon referenced in your letter, Secretary Haaland's appearance in that film pre-dated her time as Secretary. During her time in Congress, then-Representative Haaland, along with all the other members of the New Mexico delegation, were active on legislative activities related to the protection of the natural and cultural resources in the Chaco Canyon area. As Secretary, she was subsequently invited to attend a screening of this film but did not attend. Furthermore, while Secretary, she did not take steps to promote the film, and, in fact, the Department took active steps to ensure that ethics guidelines were followed appropriately.

As noted above, we are enclosing to this letter documents that are responsive to your October 2023 letter, which include an updated Ethics Recusal's & Screening Arrangements signed August 17, 2023 (though erroneously dated August 17, 2022) and other responsive documents.

If you or your staff needs any additional assistance regarding this production, please contact me
andrew_wallace@ios.doi.gov.

Sincerely,



Andrew Wallace
Director, Office of Congressional
and Legislative Affairs
U.S. Department of the Interior

cc: The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Ranking Member

The Honorable Melanie Stansbury
Ranking Member, Oversight and Investigations