

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 26, 2019

Honorable David L. Bernhardt
Secretary
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

We write to express our opposition to Mr. William Perry Pendley's continued role as Acting Director at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). BLM is a key partner across the country, managing vast expanses of public lands and the natural and cultural resources they contain. The American people deserve a leader at the BLM who will work on behalf of its mission. Mr. Pendley, however, is not that leader. Accordingly, we request that you terminate Mr. Pendley's acting director authority immediately.

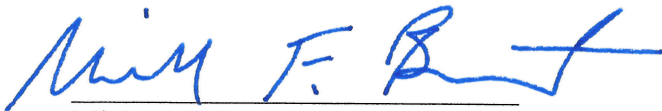
For decades, Mr. Pendley has advocated for the widespread sale of public lands and fought to erode America's conservation legacy. In notes from his time with the Reagan Administration, Mr. Pendley wrote, "Sell all BLM lands E. of Miss." For nearly 30 years after that, Mr. Pendley continued to promote these ideas as President of the Mountain States Legal Foundation, fighting for expanded oil and gas development in wild places, fewer protections for critical wildlife, and less protected public land. Over the course of his career, he's argued for eliminating the Endangered Species Act, abolishing the Antiquities Act, and repealing laws that safeguard sportsmen's access. While writing five books focused on his view of western liberties, such as "War on the West" and "Sagebrush Rebel," Mr. Pendley failed to recognize that freedom for many Americans comes from the shared ownership of more than 600 million acres of public land.

As recently as 2016, Mr. Pendley wrote an article entitled, "The Federal Government Should Follow the Constitution and Sell Its Western Lands." In it, Pendley incorrectly argues that the Founding Fathers intended all lands owned by the federal government to be sold and suggests that obtaining title to public land and driving public land ownership down are laudable goals. The fact that Mr. Pendley recently defended this article by suggesting it was an academic exercise is exactly our concern. Such exercises – driven by Washington D.C. think tanks and special interests – are completely out of line with the views of a vast majority of Americans who realize that our public lands are critical to economic growth across the country, particularly in rural communities.

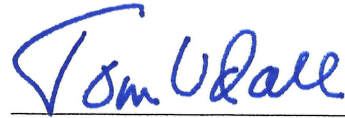
As the BLM considers a major reorganization, there is no reason for this effort to be led by an Acting Director who spent his career attempting to dismantle the agency. Keeping Mr. Pendley atop the BLM is an affront to all Americans who believe in the balanced, multiple use and sustained yield mission of the agency. While Mr. Pendley has said that "an oft-repeated truth...[is] to call the federal government the 'world's worst neighbor,'" we can think of no worse neighbor than one who spent the last thirty years trying to burn down the neighborhood.

The American people deserve better. Therefore, we request that you rescind Mr. Pendley's authority as Acting Director of the BLM and that the President nominate a BLM Director with a true commitment to our public lands and waters. Thank you for considering this request.

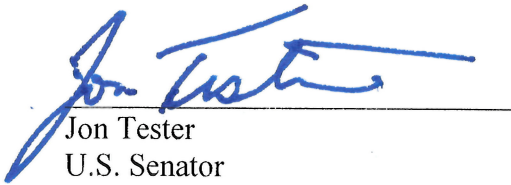
Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
U.S. Senator



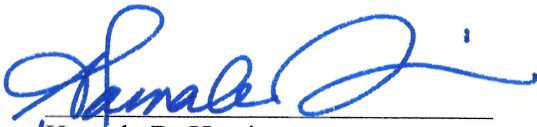
Tom Udall
U.S. Senator



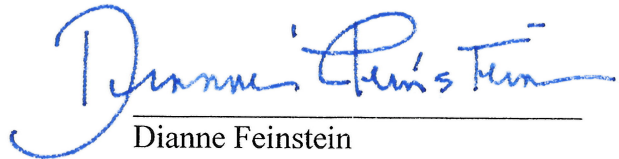
Jon Tester
U.S. Senator



Martin Heinrich
U.S. Senator



Kamala D. Harris
U.S. Senator



Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator



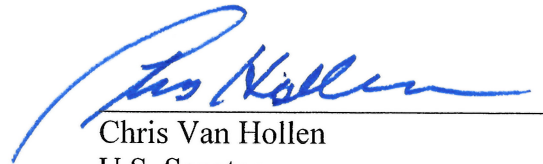
Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator



Bernard Sanders
U.S. Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
U.S. Senator



Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senator



Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
U.S. Senator