

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, D.C. 20510**

October 1, 2020

The Honorable Jim Inhofe  
Chairman  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
Russell Senate Building, Room 228  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
Russell Senate Building, Room 228  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Ranking Member  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs Inhofe and Smith and Ranking Members Reed and Thornberry:

As you work to finalize the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we write to request that you include the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act, and other public lands protections, in the final conference report.

The CORE Act is bicameral bill that was written by Coloradans to protect 400,000 acres of public land in Colorado and has now twice passed the U.S. House of Representatives on a bipartisan basis. The bill would designate 73,000 acres of new wilderness, nearly 80,000 acres of new recreation and wildlife conservation management areas, and expand protections for more than 200,000 acres in the Thompson Divide. The public lands protected in the CORE Act are important to sportsmen and ranchers, and help to sustain Colorado's \$28 billion outdoor recreation economy. After years of collaboration, careful consultation, and negotiation, the CORE Act enjoys the full support of seven counties, 12 cities and towns, the State of Colorado, and countless outdoor businesses, sportsmen, conservation, and recreation organizations. Given the broad support for this bill in our state, we urge you to include the CORE Act in the final NDAA.

In addition to protecting public lands, the CORE Act celebrates our nation's military by establishing the nation's first-ever National Historic Landscape at Camp Hale. This designation, covering 28,000 acres surrounding Camp Hale, would ensure that future generations learn about the 10th Mountain Division's storied history and see where the famed "Soldiers on Skis" trained before leading our nation to victory during World War II. This new designation would expand historic preservation and interpretation in the area, prevent future development, and help to cleanup unexploded ordnance. Aside from Camp Hale, we have also worked for years to ensure that the bill does not affect current and future military training in Colorado, including at the Army National Guard High Altitude Aviation Training Site (HAATS). In a December 2019 letter, the Department of Defense confirmed that "the land management designation in S. 241/H.R. 823 (*CORE Act*) should not affect current or future military overflight in Colorado."

Additionally, in October 2019, Colorado's then-Adjutant General, Lieutenant General Michael Loh, expressed the support of the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs for the CORE Act.

For more than a decade, Coloradans developed the CORE Act and have consistently called on Congress to enact these public land protections. Finally, as stated above, in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, the House of Representatives passed the bill: first as a standalone measure on Oct. 31, 2019 (H.R. 823), and later as an amendment to the House FY21 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 2500) on July 21, 2020. In both cases, the measure passed the House with bipartisan support. Coloradans shouldn't have to wait any longer for Congress to pass the CORE Act into law. The FY21 NDAA is the best opportunity for Congress to respond to the wish of Colorado, and there is ample precedent for new public land protections in the NDAA. In the FY15 NDAA, Congress passed the *Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act*, to protect more than 100,000 acres in the San Juan National Forest in Colorado. We encourage you to use this opportunity in the FY21 NDAA to protect public land in Colorado.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

  
Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

  
Joe Neguse  
United States Representative

CC: Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
House Committee on Natural Resources