

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

We write to condemn the firing of over 2,300 Department of the Interior (DOI) employees, particularly those based in Colorado. The 6,000 DOI professionals in Colorado fill a critical role, not just within DOI but in communities across our state. DOI employees protect our public lands, fulfill our trust responsibilities to Tribes, conserve wildlife resources, support access to recreation on some of our state's most beautiful landscapes, and manage land for grazing, energy, mining, and other activities. A robust workforce is critical to fulfilling DOI's mission to steward our natural resources and cultural heritage. We urge you to promptly reinstate the terminated employees in Colorado and across the country.

DOI employees manage and conserve the resources that are an essential part of what makes Colorado so special – including our 13 National Park Service (NPS) units, 8.3 million acres of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and 8 wildlife refuges managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These workers keep our lands accessible to the public and help boost our state's \$14 billion recreational economy. Already, the repercussions of the terminations are evident at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument in Colorado, which now needs to close two days a week due to a lack of staffing. Blanket dismissals of NPS staff and other land management employees will continue to have a direct effect on public access for visitors statewide, as well as on the businesses in gateway communities surrounding federal lands.

The decision to fire these employees will reverberate throughout Colorado's economy and across the places and resources the agency is meant to protect nationwide. DOI's land management employees often work in rural areas, where communities are tight-knit and often tied closely to the land – and workforce impacts will ripple across those local economies. In many places across Colorado, land management agencies are already challenged by the recruitment and retention of employees in remote areas, including those with a high cost of living. This unjust termination of employees will make management of lands in those areas all the more difficult.

Just as the land managers in the field are critical to stewardship of our resources, so are the thousands of DOI scientists, grant managers, engineers, and other professionals based out of the Denver Federal Center. The agency's decreased capacity from firing these employees is compounded by the administration's recent hiring freeze and the 2,700 DOI employees that accepted the administration's "Fork in the Road" deferred resignation offer. The current volatility and uncertainty affect DOI's workforce as a whole, not just those who were fired – and that in turn threatens both our economy and Coloradans' access to the places they love.

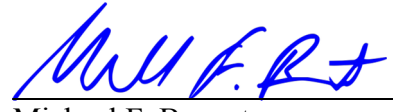
We also object strongly to the fact that many who were terminated in this mass firing were told they were dismissed for performance reasons, regardless of the employees' actual performance. The probationary employees who were fired range from those who joined the DOI workforce within the past year, bringing fresh enthusiasm and perspectives, to those with such strong experience that they were recently promoted. Without these employees, the administration will not be able to process permits for activities on public land, including for grazing and energy production. DOI capacity for building our wildfire resilience and protecting our headwaters will diminish. The indiscriminate and short-sighted nature of the firings will hamper the overall mission of the DOI, with the public and our natural resources bearing the brunt of this decision.

DOI's recent terminations hold serious on-the-ground consequences for our lands, waters, communities, Tribes, ranchers, and our state's broader economy. We urge you to reinstate the recently terminated employees in their positions immediately.

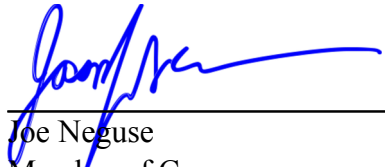
Sincerely,



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



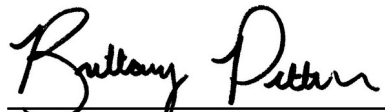
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



Jason Crow
Member of Congress