

Address

Date

The Honorable (Senator #1)
United States Senate
XXX _____ Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable (Senator #2)
United States Senate
XXX _____ Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable (Representative XXX)
U.S. House of Representatives
XXX _____ House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Interior's Plan to Move Washington Office Employees to the West

Dear Senators XXX and XXX and Congress _____ XXX:

Undoubtedly you are aware of the Department of the Interior's plans to move the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Washington Office (headquarters) and its staff to the West. Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Joseph R. Balash notified key Congressional committees about the plan on July 16th. A copy of his letter is available online here: <http://bit.ly/2YBXFxD>. The plan is supported by Senator Corey Gardner, (R-CO).

Briefly, the Interior Department is relocating the BLM's headquarters out of Washington, DC to Grand Junction, Colorado along with 27 employees. These include the currently vacant Bureau Director position (President Trump has not nominated anyone to fill the Director's position), the normally career Deputy Director for Operations, and all Assistant Directors plus some support staff.

The normally political Deputy Director for Policy and Programs will remain in DC along with sixty employees. These are mostly budget, public, legislative, regulatory affairs, and FOIA staff.

All managers and program leaders will be distributed among BLM's twelve State Offices and its National Operations Center near Denver. Most will continue to perform headquarters work. Some positions will be reassigned to operational capacities and will be assigned to report to State Directors. Many long-term unfunded vacant positions will be shifted to State Offices but are unlikely to be filled any time soon.

I am a constituent and supporter of yours residing in [REDACTED]. I am also a retired employee of the [Bureau of Land Management] [Washington Office] [Interior Department]. I am also member of the Public Lands Foundation (PLF), a nonprofit organization whose 600 members are mostly BLM retirees. The PLF strongly opposes Interior's actions, and PLF has posted letters and its Position Statement on its website at: www.publicland.org.

Interior is fast-tracking as many relocations as it can to use available FY 2019 Interior reorganization appropriations before the end of the fiscal year. There are 222 positions slated to relocate. No doubt, some are currently occupied by women and minorities. I suspect many, if not most, current Washington Office employees will not make the move. Rather, they will retire, find new jobs, or be terminated and end up on unemployment.

House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Raul Grijalva has scheduled a hearing on this matter for September 10 at 10 a.m. I and the PLF are concerned that by that time much of Interior's actions may well be underway. However, Interior may need additional monies for FY 2020 to fully implement its plan.

I believe Interior's plan is so radical that it makes me wonder whether anyone in BLM's senior leadership was involved or even consulted in the plan's development.

I urge you to contact Chairman Grijalva and Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairman Murkowski to discuss ways to redact Interior's actions before they proceed to the point of no return.

Both I and the PLF are available to discuss this urgent matter further and work with you to stop this unnecessary and ill-founded proposed relocation plan. I can be reached by phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email at xxxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx, and the PLF can be reached at (703)-935-0916 and at info@publicland.org.

Sincerely,