

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE  
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS  
LT. GOVERNOR

October 8, 2024

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

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

Dear President Biden and Secretary Haaland:

As we approach the inevitable transition at the White House, history suggests your administration could make far-reaching decisions impacting Americans' lives and livelihoods in the coming months.

Recent history reveals presidents make these edicts during the heat of a political campaign or during the waning days of an administration. Less than 50 days from the 1996 presidential election, President Bill Clinton stood in Arizona to announce the creation of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument on 1.7 million acres in Utah. Three days before his final term ended in 2001, President Clinton created by proclamation the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument on 377,000 acres. Three weeks before the end of his final term in 2017, President Barack Obama created by proclamation Bears Ears National Monument on 1.35 million acres. However intentioned, each of these unilateral actions threatened livelihoods, undermined the well-established role of states, and frustrated communities whose lives were disrupted.

While monument designations get a lot of attention, administrative agencies have a tendency to quietly issue directives or rules on the eve of an election or in the last hours before a presidential transition. These actions can be, and often are, equally disruptive to Montana's way of life, hardworking Montanans, their jobs, and our economy. For instance, executive action directing mineral withdrawals or introducing new species, such as placement of bison on the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, would be fundamental threats to Montana's communities and way of life.

To get more directly to the point on these specific issues and before addressing a larger point, I have two simple questions for you. First, does the administration or any of its agencies have any designs or plans to implement or impose any mineral withdrawal in the State of Montana? Second, does the administration or any of its agencies have any designs or plans to introduce bison to the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge?

While these, and other, administrative decisions may reflect the natural incentives of a campaign cycle or opportunistic activism during a lame-duck period, common sense and respect require major decisions such as these be developed only with significant public input and community support, and after a transparent, robust public process. Therefore, I urge you and your agencies to refrain from any unilateral action in Montana in the last months of your administration.

In the event your administration, departments, or agencies ignore this request and decide to recklessly plow ahead, imposing rules and decisions on Montana by dictatorial fiat, please know we will wholeheartedly oppose those actions and be well-prepared for litigation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Greg Gianforte', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Greg Gianforte  
Governor

cc: U.S. Senator Steve Daines  
U.S. Senator Jon Tester  
U.S. Representative Matt Rosendale  
U.S. Representative Ryan Zinke  
U.S. Representative Bruce Westerman, Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources  
Tracy Stone-Manning, Director, Bureau of Land Management  
Martha Williams, Director, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service