



February 10th, 2021

Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Matt Rosendale
1037 Longworth HOB
Washington D.C 20515

Dear Senator Daines and Representative Rosendale:

We the undersigned Montana Legislative American Indian Caucus members are deeply concerned with your stated opposition to the historic nomination of Congresswoman Deb Haaland to be the next Secretary for the Department of the Interior (DOI). New Mexico Congresswoman Haaland could be the first-ever Native American Cabinet Secretary in history and the first enrolled tribal member to lead the Interior.

Rep. Haaland and her family have lived on this soil for 35 generations, her father served this nation as a Marine, and she has a deep understanding of the relationship people have with our lands and wildlife. Any characterizations to the contrary are patently false. Implying so, as you both have, is deeply offensive to all Native Americans and the generations of Indigenous peoples who have lived on the land and managed it sustainably for generations.

When the previous administration nominated a known extractive resource lobbyist with nearly two dozen conflicts of interest to be the Interior secretary, not a word of concern was spoken. Adding insult to the lack of tribal consultation during the past administration was the hiring of known racist and zealot William Perry Pendley. Pendley not only sued to overturn Montana's stream access law, but he also represented an oil and gas corporation that wanted to develop the sacred Badger-Two Medicine. When concerns were raised about Pendley's past and his record of racism, we were told they were overblown.

On the contrary, Rep. Haaland brings a deep understanding of the issues we face having previously served as the Vice Chair of the House Natural Resources Committee and Chair of the National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands subcommittee. She also comes from and represents a state, much like Montana, that must work to strike a balance between tribes, natural resource development, and public land users while ensuring those lands are viable for future generations. She is also uniquely qualified to uphold the Federal government's treaty and trust responsibilities to Native American tribes, a priority for all Montana tribes.

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Issuing sound bite press releases full of hyperbole is a disservice to tribes and all Montanans. Making knee-jerk reactions based on pressure from special interests and monied donors before a nominee's confirmation hearing isn't going to change the reality of a new administration and the nation's need to have qualified individuals in top-level positions like Rep. Haaland.

On behalf of the Montana Legislative American Indian Caucus, please reconsider passing judgment on this historic nomination until the confirmation hearing has concluded and Montanans have had a chance to hear directly from the nominee. We also strongly encourage you to be on the right side of history and join us in supporting this historic nomination that will benefit all Montana's eight Native American Tribal Nations, the great State of Montana, and the United States.

Sincerely,

Sen. Mike Fox (SD-16)
Sen. Susan Webber (SD-8)
Sen. Shane Morigeau (SD-48)
Rep. Marvin Weatherwax (HD-15)
Rep. Sharon Peregoy (HD-42)

Rep. Tyson Running Wolf (HD-16)
Rep. Rynalea Whiteman Pena (HD-41)
Rep. Jonathan Windy Boy (HD-32)
Rep. Donavon Hawk (HD-76)