

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 21, 2016

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20040

Re: Finalizing the Proposed Rule “Competitive Processes, Terms, and Conditions: Leasing Public Lands for Solar and Wind Energy Development”

Dear Secretary Jewell:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has made significant progress expanding renewable energy on Federal lands. Since 2009, the BLM has approved more than 15,000 MW of new solar, wind and geothermal energy projects, and witnessed the construction of the first utility-scale solar plants on public lands. With the recent extension of renewable energy tax credits and strong demand for renewable energy, we will see continued interest in developing the exceptional wind and solar energy resources found in the Western United States.

In order to meet this rising demand for renewable energy on our public lands, the BLM published a draft rule in September 2014 to update its antiquated regulations for siting renewable energy projects, entitled the “Competitive Processes, Terms, and Conditions: Leasing Public Lands for Solar and Wind Energy Development.” We strongly encourage you to prioritize completion of this rulemaking.

This proposed rule, when finalized, must ensure that the American taxpayer receives fair market value for renewable energy development. It should also incentivize project proposals in pre-screened low environmental impact zones (Designated Leasing Areas). Additionally, any competitive bidding processes should be done in a way that promotes predictability and reduces uncertainty by ensuring bidders have access to full information regarding process and costs at the time of the bid.

Transitioning from the antiquated right-of-way process for siting renewable energy projects to a competitive leasing process (as has long been the practice for fossil fuel resources) should generate considerably more revenue for the taxpayer. For example, in 2014 the total rent paid to the U.S. Treasury for all solar and wind right-of-ways was \$12.7 million. Yet a single pilot competitive lease sale in 2014 for the Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone in Nevada brought in \$5.8

million. Adopting a modern approach to leasing should also benefit the renewable energy industry by streamlining the application process in Designated Leasing Areas.

We applaud the BLM for taking the important step of proposing this rule; however, we also believe that more needs to be done. A long-term strategy for advancing responsible renewable energy development on public lands should also guarantee that a portion of the revenues are used to assist local communities, help with habitat restoration, and reduce the backlog of renewable energy permits.

These priorities are embodied in the Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act of 2015 (H.R. 2663), bipartisan legislation that complements the BLM's proposed competitive leasing rulemaking and is supported by a coalition of sportsmen, conservation groups, and local governments. We hope the BLM will complete its rulemaking and work with Congress to advance this complimentary legislative solution to expand responsible renewable energy on public lands.

Cc: Shaun Donovan, Director, Office of Management and Budget

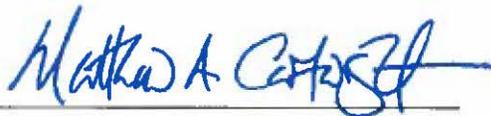
Sincerely,



Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



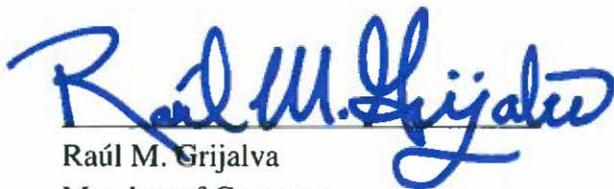
Col. Paul Cook (Ret.)
Member of Congress



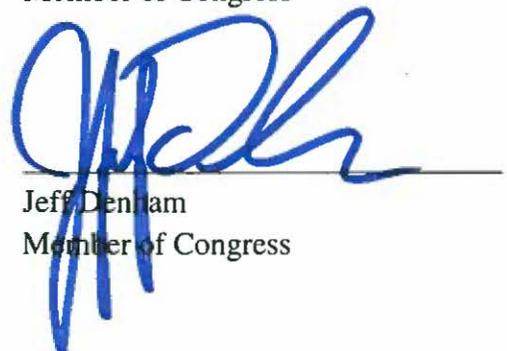
Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress



Dan Benishek, M.D.
Member of Congress

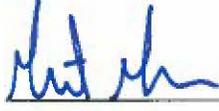


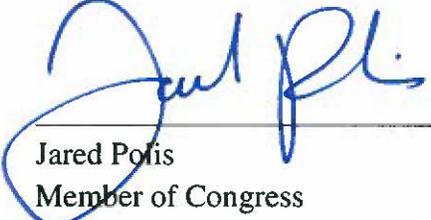
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Jeff Denham
Member of Congress

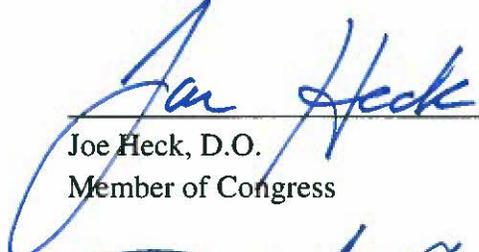

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress


Garret Graves
Member of Congress

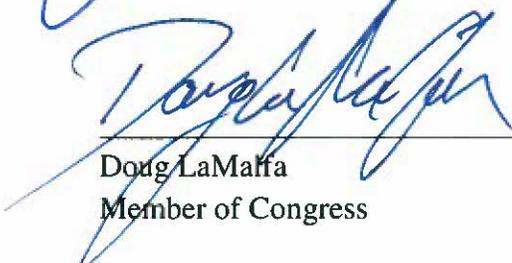

Jared Polis
Member of Congress


Cresent Hardy
Member of Congress


Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress


Joe Heck, D.O.
Member of Congress


Jared Huffman
Member of Congress


Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress