



January 10, 2017

New Interior Secretary Must Protect the Interest of the Taxpayer

Dear Energy and Natural Resources Committee Member,

As you consider The Honorable Ryan Zinke's nomination to become Secretary of the Interior, we ask you to ensure that adequate consideration is given to the taxpayer's interest in properly managing federal lands. The Department of the Interior manages more than 500 million acres of taxpayer-owned federal lands that contain valuable revenue producing resources. These lands are one of our greatest assets, and they should be treated accordingly.

Taxpayers for Common Sense is a national, non-partisan budget watchdog organization that promotes sound fiscal policy across the federal government. Since 1995, we have actively worked to ensure that taxpayers receive a fair return on all resources extracted or developed on federal lands and waters, including hardrock minerals, oil and gas, coal, wind and solar. **As the rightful owners, taxpayers are entitled to fair market compensation for the resources extracted from our lands and waters, just like any private landowner.**

The Secretary of the Interior oversees the majority of energy development, as well as grazing and hard rock mineral extraction on federal lands. Over the years, Taxpayers for Common Sense has made recommendations in each of these areas to increase transparency, decrease taxpayer liabilities, and ensure fair return on federally-owned assets.

Natural resources extracted from federal lands and waters provide great benefit to the country, including valuable revenue for the federal coffers. Any development or mining on federal lands and waters must be conducted in a manner that protects taxpayers' interests. The Department of the Interior therefore has an obligation not only to apply and collect appropriate fees, rents, and royalties in exchange for access to public resources, but also to prevent taxpayers from shouldering any long-term liabilities created by such access, like clean-up or mitigation costs.

As you move forward with the confirmation of Representative Zinke, we urge you to ensure that the following objectives are a top priority for the next Secretary of the Interior:

- 1) **Obtain fair market value for coal, oil, gas, wind, solar and other resources developed on federal lands and waters;**
- 2) **Ensure transparent leasing process for energy development on federal lands and waters;**
- 3) **Prevent and limit the waste of taxpayer-owned natural resources; and**

- 4) **Limit taxpayer liabilities associated with clean-up and mitigation of mining, drilling, and other operations on federal land through sufficient bonding and other protections.**

The country is now facing a \$20 trillion debt. Many things need to be done to resolve the nation's fiscal woes, not the least of which is ensuring federal taxpayers get the revenue they deserve for the resources they own. Further, taxpayers must not be saddled with long-term liabilities of resource development.

For additional information on Taxpayers for Common Sense's energy and natural resources programs, please contact me or Autumn Hanna at Autumn[at]taxpayer.net.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Ry Alexander". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "A." followed by a stylized "Ry" and then the last name "Alexander".

Ryan Alexander
President