



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

January 20, 2021

The Honorable Joe Manchin
Chairman
Committee on Energy and
Natural Resources
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and
Natural Resources
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, and Members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:

On behalf of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest, largest, and most representative organization comprised of tribal nations and their citizens, I write in support of the confirmation of Representative Deb Haaland as Secretary of the Department of the Interior. As an organization that seeks to ensure the United States upholds its responsibility to tribal nations, honors its treaties, and provides a voice for Indian Country in the federal government, it is with tremendous enthusiasm that I urge you to confirm President Joseph R. Biden's nomination of Rep. Haaland to lead the Department of the Interior.

The Department of the Interior (Interior) has vast responsibilities including management of public lands, water resources, minerals, wildlife management, and cultural heritage preservation, and it is critically entrusted with upholding the federal trust and treaty responsibilities to 574 tribal nations and more than 5.2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives. The day-to-day decisions of Interior impact all aspects of tribal sovereignty and self-governance, from education to economic development to law enforcement. As a result of this unique fiduciary obligation to tribal nations, it is critical that Interior employees and leadership reflect the communities the department serves. Native Americans have long served the United States in the military and more increasingly in local, state, and federal leadership; and in November 2020, NCAI passed resolution [#PDX-20-059](#) supporting the appointment of a Native American as Secretary of the Interior.

President Biden's nominee, Rep. Haaland – a citizen of the Pueblo of Laguna, a 35th-generation New Mexican, and one of the first Native American women to serve in the House of Representatives – is immensely qualified to serve her country as Interior Secretary. In the 116th Congress, Rep. Haaland served as Vice Chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources and Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forest, and Public Lands, and also as a member of the Indigenous Peoples Subcommittee and the House Armed Services Committee. Her House leadership roles illustrate a commitment to the stewardship of the Nation's resources and directly correlate with the duties and responsibilities of the Secretary of the Department of the Interior. Additionally, Rep. Haaland served as Co-Chair of the House Native American Caucus, where she exemplified bipartisanship and

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ensured that tribal inclusion in COVID-19 emergency relief was a non-partisan matter.

During her service in Congress, Rep. Haaland has demonstrated an understanding of the diverse needs of tribal and rural communities and succeeded in passing bills addressing business development, public lands and resource management, and infrastructure. She has also been a champion for public safety and justice, and played an instrumental role in the passage of Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act of 2019. The latter bill was the first to be sponsored by four Native members of Congress – Republican and Democrat – to address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) by bringing together law enforcement, tribal leaders, federal partners, and survivors.

Rep. Haaland has also been a proponent of energy production and related job development to support sustainable economies and advance our nation's resource independence. As an organization, NCAI is comprised of tribal nations representing both traditional and renewable energy producers, and we are confident in Rep. Haaland's ability to serve the needs and interests of multiple stakeholders and tribal nations who have some of the largest energy reserves within the United States.

In conclusion, NCAI asks you to support the confirmation of Rep. Haaland as Secretary of the Interior based on her extensive qualifications and demonstrated public service. Additionally, Rep. Haaland's record of legislative successes showcases that she will continue to bring pragmatism and bipartisanship to the performance of her responsibilities as Interior Secretary. Lastly, as a Native American woman, Rep. Haaland descends from people who have managed our nation's lands since time immemorial, and thus she understands deeply that these landscapes are multipurpose and integral to sustaining many communities, economies, and cultures. As Native people, it is our honor to support Rep. Haaland in this historic role and on behalf of the National Congress of American Indians, I ask that you swiftly confirm Rep. Haaland as Interior Secretary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'F. Sharp', written in a cursive style.

Fawn Sharp
President
National Congress of American Indians