

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 29, 2016

Hon. Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Hon. Loretta E. Lynch
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Secretary Jewell and Attorney General Lynch:

We write today to request a briefing on the federal response to the illegal occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, and how your agencies plan to respond to the broader pattern of threats to our public lands, the communities that neighbor them, and the employees who help maintain these important public natural resources. This has been made even more urgent by the unfolding events in the last few days.

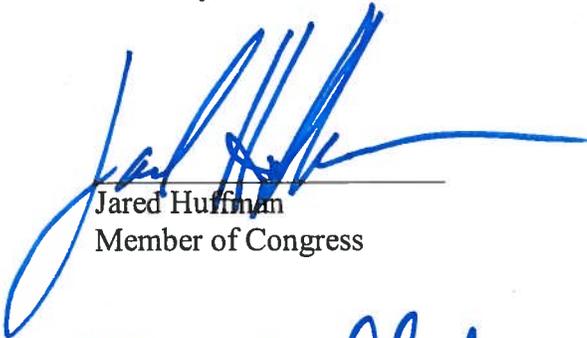
For nearly a month, the armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge has represented a threat to surrounding communities, tribal sacred artifacts and resources, refuge employees, archaeological sites, and the public lands and wildlife the refuge was established to protect. Moreover, the long-running standoff has sent a dangerous message to armed vigilante groups that the threat of violence is a viable political tool.

As you know, the situation in Oregon did not happen in isolation. Many militants have interpreted the lack of prosecution of Cliven Bundy for his 2014 armed standoff with the Bureau of Land Management to mean the federal government will turn a blind eye when it comes to prosecuting antigovernment extremists. To this day, federal employees and local communities in Nevada continue to face violent intimidation tactics, preventing critical law enforcement and restoration work from moving forward. Numerous rural communities in the West worry they could be next.

We look forward to discussing with you how we can ensure that Americans' access to public land is not disrupted by armed groups in the future.

Thank you in advance for your timely consideration of this request.

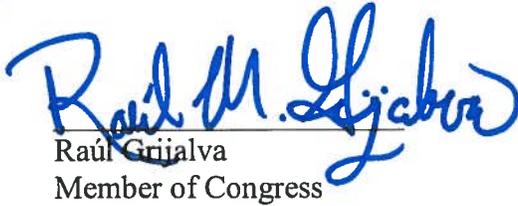
Sincerely,



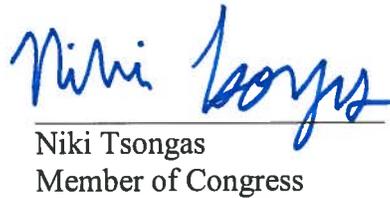
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress



Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
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Scott Peters
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Alan Lowenthal
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