

JON TESTER
MONTANA

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BANKING
COMMERCE
INDIAN AFFAIRS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

SENATE HART BUILDING
SUITE 311
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
202-224-2644

INTERNET:
tester.senate.gov/contact

United States Senate

March 6, 2018

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-146A U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairman Leahy:

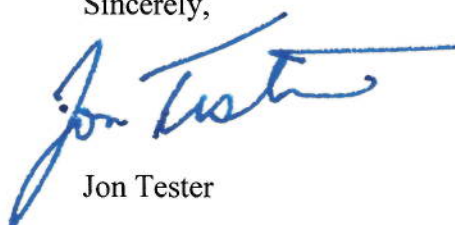
I am writing to respectfully request that you include the Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act (S. 941) in the upcoming omnibus appropriations package for Fiscal Year 2018. This bipartisan legislation protects lands on the doorstep of our nation's first national park from the impacts of mineral development and reaffirms the protection President Trump's Department of Interior is already pursuing.

In recent years, two mining corporations pursued permits for exploratory drilling on private land north of Yellowstone National Park. The Park County community, from county commissioners to hundreds of local businesses, homeowners, and conservation groups, has loudly voiced their concerns about the impacts of largescale mineral development on their local economy and quality of life. This locally crafted legislation, supported by those same groups, does not bar any activity on private lands, but simply withdraws the mineral rights on 30,000 acres of public land in the area, limiting the scope of any future mineral development. The Department of Interior has been pursuing an administrative withdrawal for the same area, and Secretary Zinke has pushed to expedite reviews of the withdrawal, and supports the maximum twenty-year withdrawal for the area.

While a 20-year administrative withdrawal would formally recognize the need to protect this essential area, it simply kicks the can down the road for the next generation while leaving the threat to the region in place. We have a simple, bipartisan solution to protect this area for our kids and grandkids forever. The entire Montana delegation supports protecting this area, as does local government, local businesses, conservation interests and the Department of Interior. Additionally, the Forest Service made the initial request for a withdrawal. My legislation implements the collaborative, targeted protection the community is asking for and fends off future conflict on the same issue. As such, I urge you to include S. 941 into any appropriations omnibus legislation for Fiscal Year 2018.

Thank you for your continued leadership on the Appropriations Committee. I look forward to working with you to move this critical legislation forward, and welcome any feedback or questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester

BOZEMAN
(406) 586-4450

BUTTE
(406) 723-3277

GLENDIVE
(406) 365-2391

GREAT FALLS
(406) 452-9585

HELENA
(406) 449-5401

KALISPELL
(406) 257-3360

BILLINGS
(406) 252-0550

MISSOULA
(406) 728-3003