



Greg Gianforte
Congress of the United States

Montana
March 8, 2018

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

As you wrap up work on the fiscal year 2018 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, I urge you to review the following priorities from the Interior, Energy and Environment Subcommittee's jurisdiction for inclusion in a final package.

First, I appreciate the Committee's strong work in approving a full set of appropriations bills, including an Interior, Environment and Related Agencies bill. It is important to maintain the strong work the House has done and continue support for many important policy provisions as shared by the Congressional Western Caucus.

I especially wish to highlight the need for a package to address fire-borrowing and improve active forest management. I support the ideas of H.R. 2936, the Resilient Federal Forests Act. I am a cosponsor of this legislation, and believe we cannot address the wildfire issue without active management, litigation reform, and a fix to fire-borrowing.

I would also encourage the Committee to resist efforts to repurpose Abandoned Mine Land funding for economic development, and to reject measures that would increase taxes on coal production. This effort would be premature given the recent passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, as well as extensions of tax credits to encourage coal production.

Finally, I wish to urge inclusion of legislation I have introduced to address concerns in my home state of Montana. The bills were referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

H.R. 3764, the Little Shell Restoration Act, would federally recognize the Little Shell Tribe. The Little Shell Tribe has been consistently wronged by the Bureau of Indian Affairs despite the fact they are deserving of federal recognition and struggled to receive such confirmation for over 100 years. Recognition for the tribe would mean access to

funds held in trust, but they have unfortunately seen 23 other tribes receive recognition since 1960. This year, Congress moved on the recognition of six tribes in Virginia, and I ask for the same consideration for the Little Shell Tribe in any FY18 omnibus package.

I ask for the inclusion of H.R. 4644, the Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act. This locally-supported, bipartisan legislation, would permanently withdraw the mineral rights to 30,000 acres of public land surrounding the gateway to Yellowstone National Park. This bill uses a collaborative approach to assist the community, as well as protecting the gateway community from future conflicts.

I also ask for your consideration of is H.R. 4645, the East Rosebud Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This is another example of Montanans coming together to preserve and protect an area important to this community. This bill would protect parts of East Rosebud Creek, while respecting the community's needs as it develops closer to the creek.

The last pieces of legislation I introduced are two bills that focus on Montana's longstanding issue of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs), H.R. 5148, the Protect Public Use of Public Lands Act, and H.R. 5149, the Unlocking Public Lands Act. H.R. 5148 would release nearly 450,000 acres of United States' Forest Service (USFS) land deemed not suitable for wilderness in the early 1980s, while H.R. 5149 would release 240,000 acres that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) deemed unsuitable, as well. Congress designated itself the authority to add or release these study areas, and these bills would finish a job started almost 40 years ago.

Finally, I request legislative language that would help advance the date that the Blackfeet Water Rights Settlement Act funds would be available to the Blackfeet Tribe. This money is crucial to begin needed updates and repairs to the St. Mary's Water system. I respectfully request the below clarifying legislative language to ensure the Tribe can receive the authorized funds in a timely manner:

a. Section 3720(a)(3)(B) of the Water Infrastructure Improvements For the Nation Act (Public Law 114-322; 130 Stat. 1628) is amended by striking "3706" and inserting "6".

b. Expiration – Section 3720(h) of the Water Infrastructure Improvements For the Nation Act (Public Law 114-322; 130 Stat. 1628) is amended by striking "2026" and inserting "2025".

c. Section 3718 of the Water Infrastructure Improvements For the Nation Act (Public Law 114-322; 130 Stat. 1628) is amended by adding subsection (c) that provides: "Notwithstanding sections 3716(e) and 3717(e), to the extent funds have been appropriated, fifty percent of the amounts authorized to be appropriated to the Blackfeet Settlement Trust Fund and fifty percent of the amounts authorized to be appropriated to the Blackfeet Water Settlement Implementation Fund under this section

shall be available to the Tribe and the Secretary in a manner consistent with this Title upon the signing of the waivers pursuant to section 3720(f)(8)";

Thank you for hard work and consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Gianforte', is written over the typed name.

Greg Gianforte
Member of Congress

CC: Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Chairman Ken Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum