

Fort Belknap Indian Community



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Fort Belknap Indian Community
(Tribal Govt.)
Fort Belknap Indian Community
(Elected to administer the affairs of the community and
to represent the Assiniboine and the Gros Ventre
Tribes of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation)

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
United States House of Representatives
113 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Zinke:

The Fort Belknap Indian Community respectfully requests that you vote “no” during the House Committee on Natural Resources markup of H.R. 5780, the Utah Public Lands Initiative on September 21 and 22, 2016.

Most important, the bill proposes to take more than 100,000 acres of the Ute Indian Tribe’s Reservation lands for the State of Utah to develop oil and gas resources. This modern day Indian land grab cannot be allowed to stand. The National Congress of American Indians was so shocked by this proposal that a resolution in opposition was approved just based on a discussion draft of the bill. Please see attached.

H.R. 5780 sets a dangerous precedent and would roll back federal Indian policy back to the late 1800’s. In addition to taking lands within the Tribe’s Reservation the bill creates utility corridors, designates wild and scenic rivers limiting the Tribe’s water rights, includes local governments in the management of lands and resources, and transfers federal rights-of-way to the state. All within the Reservation.

Although the bill is promoted as “a local solution to difficult federal land management issues in eastern Utah,” in fact, much of the bill is built on the back of the Ute Indian Tribe’s Reservation. Despite 4 years and 1200 meetings with stakeholders in Utah, the Tribe did not learn about these proposals for its Reservation lands until a discussion draft was released in January 2016. In meetings since then, Congressman Bishop has rejected nearly all of the Tribe’s proposals for the bill.

The bill is also opposed by the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition, including the Navajo Nation, Hopi Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, and the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, for its handling of the Bears Ears cultural landscape. Please vote “no” on this dangerous bill.

Sincerely,