



## WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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April 19, 2017

Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W., Room 6151  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

The Governors of the West are proud of their significant role in governing and serving the citizens of this great nation. They recognize that the position they occupy – the chief elected official of a sovereign state – imposes upon them enormous responsibility and confers upon them tremendous opportunity. While Governors faithfully execute these important obligations, they acknowledge the critical role of the federal government and our shared goals of striving for a more perfect union.

As Governors, we recognize that each Administration will approach federalism differently and that each state must decide when and where to exercise state authorities in isolation, cooperation, or dissent of Administration policies. Because both the demarcation between state and federal roles and responsibilities and their execution can vary based on interpretation and the issue at hand, it is of utmost importance that the federal government maintain appropriate cooperation and consultation with states concerning policy development. Such consultation can help ensure that regulations do not infringe on state authority, dampen innovation and impair on-the-ground problem-solving.

Western Governors are encouraged to learn that President Trump's February 24, 2017 Executive Order (E.O.), *Enforcing the Regulatory Reform Agenda*, will require federal agencies to critically examine their regulatory processes. We especially appreciate the E.O.'s explicit requirement that federal agencies seek input and assistance from states. Western Governors request the opportunity to participate – either by representation on the task force or otherwise – in the Interior Department's Regulatory Reform Task Force review. We believe the Western Governors' Association's (WGA) Resolution [2017-01](#), *Building a Strong State-Federal Relationship*, is a good starting point for that conversation.

Western Governors also wish to note our great interest and equities in the E.O. requesting a *Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch*. Local, state and regional divisions of the federal government offer important services to the citizens of our states, support employment opportunities in our

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communities, help facilitate the delivery of federal financial assistance programs, and play an important role bridging and reflecting local knowledge, experience and expertise in federal policy decisions. Western Governors request consultation to ensure critical policy, program and agency consolidation and reorganization decisions remain cognizant of these interests.

States are responsible for executing all powers of governance not specifically bestowed to the federal government by the U.S. Constitution. This reservation of power to the states respects the differences between regions and peoples. It recognizes a right to self-determination at a local level. It rejects the notion that one size fits all, and it provides for a rich tapestry of local cultures, economies and environments. States regularly engage in a kind of cooperative competition in the marketplace of ideas. Western Governors are leaders in innovative governance who employ their influence and executive authority to promote initiatives for improvement of their states' economies, environments and quality of life.

Western Governors are excited to work in partnership with the federal government. By operating as authentic collaborators on the development and execution of policy, the states and federal government can demonstrably improve their respective service to the public. Western Governors are optimistic that the new Administration will be eager to unleash the power and creativity of states for the common advantage of our country. By working cooperatively with the states, the Administration can create a legacy of renewed federalism, resulting in a nation that is stronger, more resilient and more united.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. The Western Governors' Association stands ready to help coordinate the participation of Western Governors in this very important effort.

Sincerely,

  
Steve Bullock  
Governor of Montana  
Chair, WGA

  
Dennis Daugaard  
Governor of South Dakota  
Vice Chair, WGA

cc: Mick Mulvaney, Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Justin Clark, Director, White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs