



USET

SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTION FUND

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Transmitted Electronically

January 26, 2021

Chairman Joe Manchin
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Dirksen Senate Office Building
SD-304
Washington, DC, 20510

Ranking Member John Barrasso
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Dirksen Senate Office Building
SD-304
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso,

On behalf of the United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF), we state our unequivocal support for the confirmation of Congresswoman Deb Halaand as the next Secretary of the Interior. Congresswoman Haaland is a citizen of the Pueblo of Laguna and, if confirmed, will be the first Native person to lead the U.S. Department of the Interior and the first to hold a Cabinet-level position. The Department of the Interior is charged with the execution of critical parts of the trust obligation to Tribal Nations, historic preservation, and the management of a majority of federal lands. Each of its agencies has responsibilities to our governments and our people, and Congresswoman Haaland will provide critical leadership and insight to improve the Department's operations and obligations to Indian Country.

USET Sovereignty Protection Fund (USET SPF) is a non-profit, inter-tribal organization advocating on behalf of thirty-three (33) federally recognized Tribal Nations from the Northeastern Woodlands to the Everglades and across the Gulf of Mexico.¹ USET SPF is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and advancing the inherent sovereign rights and authorities of Tribal Nations and in assisting its membership in dealing effectively with public policy issues.

This is a historic moment for Indian Country and represents significant progress in the evolution of our nation-to-nation relationship with the United States. The nomination of Congresswoman Haaland sends a powerful message to Tribal Nations and Native people—one of regard, honor, affirmation, and visibility. For too long, Native experiences, perspective, understanding, and voices have been largely invisible or fundamentally misrepresented in public discourse. Too often, we are a forgotten people in our own homelands. For these reasons, and many others, the importance of this nomination cannot be overstated.

¹ USET SPF member Tribal Nations include: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (TX), Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians (ME), Catawba Indian Nation (SC), Cayuga Nation (NY), Chickahominy Indian Tribe (VA), Chickahominy Indian Tribe—Eastern Division (VA), Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (NC), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians (ME), Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (LA), Mashantucket Pequot Indian Tribe (CT), Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe (MA), Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida (FL), Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians (MS), Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut (CT), Monacan Indian Nation (VA), Nansemond Indian Nation (VA), Narragansett Indian Tribe (RI), Oneida Indian Nation (NY), Pamunkey Indian Tribe (VA), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township (ME), Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point (ME), Penobscot Indian Nation (ME), Poarch Band of Creek Indians (AL), Rappahannock Tribe (VA), Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (NY), Seminole Tribe of Florida (FL), Seneca Nation of Indians (NY), Shinnecock Indian Nation (NY), Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana (LA), Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe (VA) and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) (MA).

Because there is Strength in Unity

As Secretary of the Interior, Congresswoman Haaland will ensure that Tribal Nations are represented at the highest levels of government, including through direct dialogue with the President and his Cabinet. In doing so, we are confident that her voice will serve to improve and strengthen our relationship with the United States.

Congresswoman Haaland's unique, lived experiences and work with Tribal Nations will be critical in evolving the Department. She has both a full appreciation for our diplomatic relationship with the federal government, as well as an indigenous sensibility to the stewardship of our lands, environment, and cultural resources. This includes an appreciation for the Traditional Ecological Knowledge held by Tribal Nations. USET SPF is confident that her service will be transformative for the Department, for Indian Country, and for all Americans.

Over the years, USET SPF has had the distinct pleasure of working with Congresswoman Haaland on several issues of critical importance to Indian Country. As a Native woman she carries an innate knowledge of our history and challenges, and she is passionate about formulating solutions to right historic wrongs. As an advocate for Indian Country, Congresswoman Haaland has proven time and again that she is dedicated to improving the livelihood of Native people and she will bring that same dedication to a department with critical trust obligations to Tribal Nations. Congresswoman Haaland's leadership as the Secretary of the Interior will translate into beneficial outcomes that promote Tribal sovereignty, self-governance, and self-determination.

USET SPF extends our full support for Congresswoman Haaland as the next Secretary of the Interior. We call upon the United States Senate to act swiftly on her confirmation in accordance with its responsibility to honor its obligations to Tribal Nations. Should you have any questions or require further information, please contact Ms. Liz Malerba, USET SPF Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, at LMalerba@usetinc.org or 615-838-5906.

Sincerely,



Chief Kirk Francis
President



Vice Chairman Robert McGhee
Vice President



Chief Lynn Malerba
Secretary



Chief B. Cheryl Smith
Treasurer



Kitcki A. Carroll
Executive Director