

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 2, 2021

Mr. Scott de la Vega
Acting Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Acting Secretary de la Vega:

We write today to request clarity on Secretarial Order 3395, "Temporary Suspension of Delegated Authority", dated January 20, 2021. We have heard concerns from our constituents that the requirement for assistant secretary approval of routine authorizations may be extended indefinitely. Any extension beyond the current 60-day period would have significant consequences for ongoing activities on public land in New Mexico that require routine authorizations from bureaus within the Department of the Interior. Such authorizations, including for rights-of-way and sundry notices, are typically approved by career agency employees in New Mexico; while a temporary review period at the beginning of the new administration is reasonable, a longer shift of this authority to political appointees in Washington would have a negative impact on New Mexico's economy and revenues. We ask for your assurance that the temporary requirement for assistant secretary approval for routine authorizations will not be extended beyond the current expiration date of March 20, 2021.

In addition, we request that the department provide additional guidance to the field office regarding the processing of all categories of affected authorizations, including applications for rights-of-way and sundry notices. Clarity and transparency on the appropriate handling for these authorization requests will ensure timely processing of all applications during this review period.

As the department considers longer term policies to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and limit climate change, we ask for your assistance in ensuring that states like New Mexico receive assistance in making the transition to a zero carbon economy. Oil and gas workers and the communities they live in have helped build our nation for more than a century, and revenues from mineral production have supported New Mexico's educational system and state budget. It is morally imperative that we don't leave these workers and their communities behind as we make this transition. We are prepared to work with you and the entire Biden administration to ensure that energy states like ours are able to make a smooth transition to a diversified economy based on clean energy and a net-zero future.

Thank you for your assistance with these matters.

Sincerely,



MARTIN HEINRICH
United States Senator



BEN RAY LUJÁN
United States Senator