

Heinrich, Udall call on Trump Administration to consider public support for monuments

Written by Gallupsun Staff
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WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich led a press conference outside the U.S. Capitol with U.S. Senator Tom Udall and a number of other Senate Democrats July 11, on President Donald Trump's executive order that could unravel dozens of America's national monuments despite the strong outpouring of support from across the nation. The Senators were joined by public lands and community coalitions who called on President Trump and Department of the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to listen to the American people and keep existing monument protections in place.

The monument review threatens public lands and national monument designations including the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Río Grande del Norte National Monuments in New Mexico.

Over 2.5 million comments were submitted opposing the Department of the Interior's unprecedented national monument review. In New Mexico, strong majorities of more than 80 percent want to keep protections for existing national monuments in place. Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Rio Grande del Norte National Monuments have recieved widespread support across New Mexico.

"Erasing America's national monuments from the map would devastate our thriving outdoor recreation economy, which generates 68,000 jobs and \$6.1 billion of annual economic activity in New Mexico alone. And it could easily lead us down a slippery slope toward the selloff of our public lands to the highest bidder and massive giveaways of public resources to special interests," said Senator Heinrich, who sent letters to Secretary Zinke last week regarding the history of the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and the Rio Grande del Norte National Monuments, highlighting the broad public support and extensive consultation with and input from local communities. "The Rio Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monuments in New Mexico are two of the most spectacular places on earth—and were the direct result of the efforts of the local communities who worked for years to protect their natural and cultural heritage for future generations and recognized the enormous potential of these new monuments to serve as destinations for both locals and visitors from around the world. I stand

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with millions of Americans who want to protect and conserve our public lands, watersheds, and wildlife for our children and all future generations to enjoy.”

“For over a century, eight Republican and eight Democratic presidents have designated national monuments to preserve our nation’s treasured places—and to help grow and sustain the thriving local economies built around these national monuments. New Mexico’s Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and Río Grande del Norte national monuments are stars on the map attracting visitors from around the world. In Río Grande del Norte’s first year alone, the BLM reported a 40 percent increase in visitors to the area. Similarly, Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks has attracted visitors to the city of Las Cruces, where lodging tax revenue has grown from \$1.87 million in 2013 to \$2.04 million last year,” said Senator Udall. “But now, President Trump is threatening to take away protections from monuments across the country — including Río Grande del Norte and Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks, and Bears Ears in Southeastern Utah, the first-ever monument to be co-managed by Indian Tribes. I don’t believe that the president has the authority to rescind or shrink national monument designations. But ‘details’ like the law haven’t stopped him before, so I join New Mexicans and Americans from all backgrounds in fighting against this politically motivated attack on our public lands.”

“An attack on one national monument threatens all of our national parks and public lands,” said Gene Karpinski, president of the League of Conservation Voters. “We need to protect these pristine places for future generations so they can keep benefiting local economies, preserving ecological wonders, and serving as reminders of our nation’s rich and diverse history. It’s no wonder communities across the country mobilized to submit over 2.5 million comments so quickly when people overwhelmingly disapprove of the Trump administration’s extreme anti-environmental policies. Now it’s time for President Trump and Secretary Zinke to listen.”

“Many of these monuments were established to represent or celebrate the diverse heritage and cultures that make up this country,” said Maite Arce, president and CEO of the Hispanic Access Foundation. “We have a moral obligation to protect these special places and our cherished outdoor heritage. These places are more than just acres of land, they are chapters in the great American story.”

“Now is the time for Sec. Zinke to open his eyes and heed the millions of Americans who want to see our nation’s monuments and public lands protected for all time,” said Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune. “Public lands and waters tell the story of our nation – a story that should be of our shared democracy, not a celebration of corporate greed.”

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In June, Udall, Heinrich, and U.S. Representatives Ben Ray Luján and Michelle Lujan Grisham sent a letter urging Secretary Zinke to protect New Mexico's national monuments designated under the Antiquities Act.