

United States Senate

June 11, 2020

The Honorable David Bernhardt, Secretary
United States Department of Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

I am writing you to raise the continued concerns Montanans have regarding William Pendley's position as Acting Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Acting Director Pendley has a long history of publicly calling for the federal government to sell off the very lands he now oversees with no regard for public input or congressional approval. Additionally, your decision to install him as acting director in perpetuity clearly circumvents congressional oversight and is an abuse of power that is not backed up by common sense. If President Trump believes Acting Director Pendley should oversee the 245 million acres of public lands the BLM manages, he should formally nominate him so Pendley can be held accountable for his views. Absent that, Acting Director Pendley should be removed or resign from this position immediately.

You have continued to delegate the authority to Acting Director Pendley to lead the BLM since last July. He has not been nominated by the President to serve as the Director of the BLM. He has not had a confirmation hearing or a vote before the Senate. His only claim to his leadership position at our nation's largest land management agency comes directly from you, and you have reportedly chosen to extend that authority indefinitely. That is unacceptable and undermines the role our Constitution established for Congress in reviewing and confirming prominent leadership positions in the executive branch.

The reason the position of Director of the Bureau of Land Management is subject to basic oversight provisions is to ensure that our public lands are managed responsibly and for the benefit of the public. In addition to Acting Director Pendley's record advocating against protecting our public lands, he has previously worked to allow oil and gas development on sacred tribal lands and has had to recuse himself from working with dozens of energy and mineral groups the BLM works with directly. In his position, he has pursued an aggressive oil and gas leasing agenda that sidelines collaboratively-developed resource management plans, even while the public's ability to comment has been limited during the COVID crisis. If Acting Director Pendley is not removed from his position as Acting Director, we can expect more of the same.

I urge you to remove Mr. Pendley from his current position and to work the President to find a nominee that can be held accountable to the American people and effectively manage our public lands. I appreciate your attention to this pressing matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Tester". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Tester