United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 13, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In recent weeks, public confidence in government has been rocked by the revelation that the Internal Revenue Service specifically targeted conservative groups applying for tax exempt status. This revelation crystalizes the concern of many Americans that your Administration is focused on benefiting its friends and punishing those who have differing opinions. We are concerned about the potential for similarly targeted abuses as you consider making unilateral designations of new federal monuments.

A recent report stated that environmental groups who supported your re-election are asking you to abuse your authority under the archaic American Antiquities Act of 1906 (16 U.S.C. 431-3) to designate large swaths of federal land in states as national monuments. This is particularly problematic because the report suggests you should do so, not for the purposes of protecting important historical areas as the Act allows, but to bolster the re-election efforts of certain political allies and to stop American energy development.[1] The idea that you would use such authority to further political goals is disconcerting – particularly in light of the IRS scandal - and should be avoided at all costs.

The easiest way to ensure that you do not exacerbate distrust in the federal government is to avoid unilaterally designating any areas as national monuments. Rather than doing so through the Administrative process, you should require such monument designations be approved by Congress. Members from states where monument designations may take place are in the best position to know if there is support in their states for such a designation, and they should be a part of the process. This would protect your Administration from further accusations of politically motivated abuses of power.

Legislation, including S. 104, the National Monuments Act of 2013, has been introduced in the Senate and would require Congressional approval of monument designations as well as ensure valuable public input. Passage of that legislation would prevent you and future Presidents from accusations that you are abusing an administrative designation for political means while at the same time ensuring greater local participation.

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[1] *The Hill*, "Green Groups to Obama: Designate public lands to stop oil and gas drilling," http://thehill.com/blogs/e2-wire/e2-wire/302771-green-groups-to-obama-designate-public-lands-to-stop-oil-gas-drilling

As you know, the increase in domestic oil and gas production private and state-owned lands has spurred what little economic growth we have seen in the last 5 years, has created thousands of jobs, helped rein in rising energy prices, and improved our domestic energy security. These are all important benefits that unfortunately are not being realized on the federal lands for which you have been entrusted. Such an antiquated law should not be misused to unnecessarily hinder America's energy industry in order to score political points with radical environmental groups, to benefit political allies or to secure congressional seats.

We strongly suggest you deny these inappropriate requests and we thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

John Barrasso

Mike Crapo