

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 28, 2017

President Donald Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C., 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding your Energy Independence Executive Order. In particular, we are concerned that it will harm the economy in our Western states, diminish job opportunities in rural communities, exacerbate public health concerns, jeopardize our natural places, and make our country less secure.

Enhancing our energy independence is of utmost importance, both for our national and our economic security, but it must be accomplished through a diverse approach that creates clean renewable energy jobs, protects the environment and our public lands, and addresses climate change.

We stand ready to work with you and your Administration in reaching a balance between achieving energy independence, promoting innovation, and growing our rural economies. Unfortunately, your Executive Order takes the nation in the wrong direction. In order to account for the unique needs of our Western states, we respectfully request you rescind the Energy Independence Executive Order for the following reasons.

At the outset, the Executive Order does not account for the job benefits of the clean energy economy in the West.

The energy economy in America is changing. Due to advances in hydraulic fracturing technology, natural gas prices are the lowest in more than a decade. The market response to low natural gas prices, not regulations, has led to a shift from coal to natural gas as our primary source of fuel for electricity generation. This market response has resulted in lower levels of employment in the coal industry. To address this issue, we are eager to work across the aisle to support coal communities to revitalize their local economies, and create new and diverse job opportunities. But this Executive Order does not address the core issue of creating jobs.

Meanwhile, the clean energy industry in the United States is one of the fastest-growing sources of new jobs. With 99 percent of the nation's wind turbines located in rural areas, wind jobs are up. Last year, solar employment grew 17 times faster than the rest of the economy. Collectively, the wind and solar industry accounts for nearly 144,000 jobs and more than \$83 billion in existing capital investment in our Western states. The economic potential for renewable energy is growing nation-wide, with solar and wind expected to account for more than 550,000 jobs by 2020 nationally. Some of the greatest potential is in the West. The energy efficiency industry provides the largest source of energy jobs in the U.S., employing 2.2 million Americans in 2016.



Nearly 1.7 million of the energy efficiency jobs are in construction and manufacturing. It is imperative that we do not put policies in place that take these jobs away.

The global transition to clean energy is inevitable. Worldwide clean energy investment totaled more than \$280 billion last year and is expected to grow to more than \$7.8 trillion in 2040. It is in our economic interest to promote policies that catalyze the development of breakthrough clean and efficient energy technologies in the U.S. These policies not only support the nearly 4,000 businesses that manufacture clean energy technologies in our Western states, but also make American clean energy technologies competitive in the global market. We believe we can achieve this goal, while balancing the need to retain efficient baseload power in a way that is safe and responsible and supportive of coal communities as they undergo this transition. However, the Executive Order includes no provisions to support the renewable energy economy that is critically important in our states.

The Executive Order also neglects to consider the economic impacts of extreme weather events on our rural communities.

While a new clean energy economy has emerged, the frequency of natural disasters in our states has also grown, and has put the health of our communities, rural economy, and our natural places at risk. The West produces more than half the country's specialty crops. As temperatures rise and competition for water increases due to climate change, agricultural yields are expected to decrease and displace jobs in rural communities, threatening the nearly one million workers the agricultural industry employs in our Western states. In California alone, the current drought has hindered agricultural activity and resulted in economic losses of approximately \$2.7 billion in 2015. Climate change is expected to reduce snowpack and streamflow in the West, decreasing water supplies and harming our public lands and national parks that will become even more vulnerable if not protected, and the \$646 billion outdoor recreation economy, which would hurt countless communities like those in Nevada that rely on the outdoor recreation economy for revenue and jobs. The loss of snowpack directly will pull the rug out from under the \$4.8 billion ski industry in Colorado, which fuels mountain communities as well as mountain states like New Mexico, which employs over 2,500 people in a growing tourism and recreation sector. Wildfires in the West are increasing in frequency and severity, damaging homes and making it harder for our children and grandchildren to breathe. Climate change will only deepen the effects of drought in our states, which constitute the hottest and driest region of the country. In 2016, severe weather and climate events including drought, wildfire, flooding, and extreme storms led to 138 fatalities and caused \$46 billion in direct costs. The Executive Order will only exacerbate these challenges.

The Congressional Budget of Office, Government Accountability Office, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) have all acknowledged that the impacts of climate change are costing taxpayers and putting pressure on the Federal Budget. These expenditures are only expected to increase. In fact, a recent OMB report estimated that due to climate change, crop insurance premiums could increase by nearly half, wildland fire suppression expenditures could grow threefold each year, and sicknesses due to poor air quality could lead to billions in additional Federal health care spending each year. By the end of the century, annual taxpayer expenditures due to climate change could reach \$112 billion and the total fiscal effect of climate



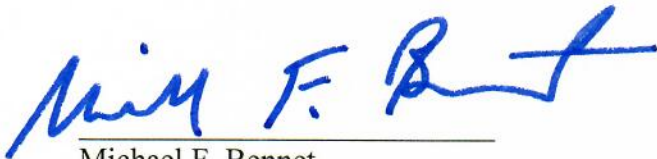
risks, after including revenue impacts, could account for as much as 15 percent of total discretionary spending. Wildfires are already costing taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year. The Executive Order will make matters worse. Instead, we should work together to combat these trends.

Finally, the Executive Order fails to make our country more secure and less reliant on foreign oil. As Secretary Mattis pointed out during the confirmation process, “the Department [of Defense] should be prepared to mitigate any consequences of a changing climate, including ensuring that our shipyards and installations will continue to function as required.” Several of the policies the Energy Independence Executive Order revokes were designed explicitly to help Federal agencies, including the Department of Defense, become more resilient to the impacts of climate change, and to reduce our reliance on foreign oil and have been successful at achieving both of those goals.

We are deeply concerned that the Executive Order, as currently written, fails to bring clean energy jobs to our rural communities, ignores the impacts that extreme weather will have on our economy and our national security, and does not decrease our reliance on foreign oil.

Moving forward, we hope that you will work with us to achieve these goals, which are critically important in the West.

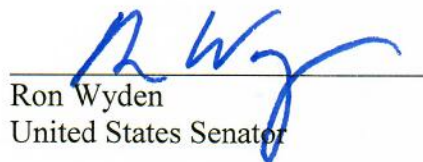
Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Tom Udall  
United States Senator



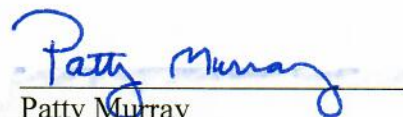
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



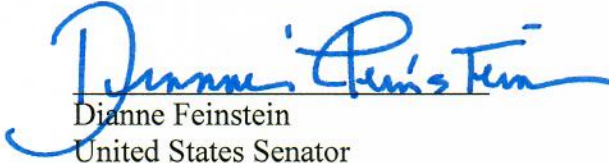
Patty Murray  
United States Senator



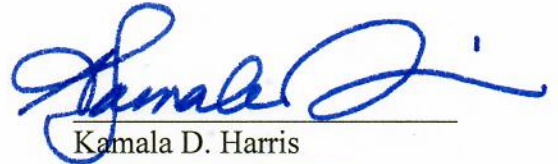
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator