

United States Senate

August 1, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

We are writing to express serious concern over the Department of the Interior's most recent directive requiring your personal review and approval of every wind and solar energy project on public lands. At a time when we should be accelerating the deployment of clean, cost-effective energy resources, this Administration is instead using the weight of the Federal government to suppress them.

Requiring every decision point—no matter how routine—to be approved in your office introduces unnecessary delays, discourages private investment, and creates a bottleneck seemingly designed to halt progress. After years of Republican calls to return land management decisions to local managers this directive represents a remarkable reversal. Rather than ensuring an efficient permitting process for all energy resources, it appears this directive actively disfavor renewable projects in favor of more expensive—and more polluting—technologies. That is not neutral governance.

At your confirmation hearing, you said, "...we need all forms of electricity. And we need more of it in the very near term... And so this is not about one versus the other. This is about how do we drive forward and increase the amount of electricity we have in our country. So... I'm both...all of the above in terms of our approach on how we do it... [with] affordability and reliability."¹

Renewable energy is currently among the cheapest forms of electricity, with utility-scale solar and wind consistently beating fossil fuels on cost per kilowatt-hour. Before this Administration began reversing course, the renewable energy sector supported hundreds of thousands of well-paying American jobs and powered more than 16 million homes using projects on public lands.² At the end of the last administration, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was actively reviewing more than 65 utility-scale onshore clean energy projects—with nearly 200 more in queue, many including storage to enhance reliability.³

These projects are not optional; they are mandated by law. Congress passed the Energy Act of 2020 (Division Z of Public Law 116–260), which explicitly directed the Department of the Interior and BLM to facilitate renewable energy development on public lands. Congress also established Renewable Energy Coordination Offices (RECOs) to streamline and improve federal permit coordination for onshore renewable projects. Further, the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023 (Public Law 118–5) established enforceable timelines

¹ U.S. Senate. (2025, January 16). *Nomination hearing of the Honorable Doug Burgum to be Secretary of the Interior* [Hearing transcript]. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. *CQ Congressional Transcripts*.

<https://plus.cq.com/doc/congressionaltranscripts-8153206>

² Bureau of Land Management, *Renewable Energy Program Overview*, U.S. Department of the Interior. Accessed July 21, 2025 <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/renewable-energy>

³ Bureau of Land Management, *FY 2024 Budget Justification: House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Federal Lands*, U.S. Department of the Interior, May 16, 2023. Available at: https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/testimony_stone-manning.pdf

under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), to ensure that reviews—including for clean energy—move forward in a timely manner.

The results of these congressional mandates were tangible. Between 2021 and 2024, the BLM approved 48 renewable energy projects (13 solar, 14 geothermal, two wind, and 18 gen-tie lines), surpassing its 25-gigawatt deployment goal—well ahead of schedule.

Instead of building on this bipartisan progress, this new directive sidelines the very policies that have delivered results. Rather than rescinding the Renewable Energy Rule—which was designed to reduce consumer energy costs, enhance permitting efficiency, and foster job creation—the Department should be focused on reforms that work across all energy sectors.

Offshore is a similar story. As of December 20, 2024, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management had approved 12 commercial-scale offshore wind energy projects in federal waters, enough to power more than 6 million homes.

The recent shift in policy is especially troubling given the increasingly partisan rhetoric from this Administration, including the repeated, baseless denigrating of renewable energy sources. Dismissing proven technologies does nothing to bring down energy costs or improve grid reliability. The Federal government should not be picking winners and losers based on political preference. States should have the flexibility to leverage the energy resources that best suit their geography and economy. Further, slowing down wind and solar projects on public lands will be especially detrimental to state and county governments, as they now stand to lose the very revenues from these projects they have fought for years to secure.

This new policy is not effective or efficient public land management. It does not serve American energy security, nor does it strengthen our global competitiveness. And it certainly will not deliver on your stated commitment to affordability and reliability.

We strongly urge you to rescind this directive and restore a permitting framework for renewable energy that is transparent, timely, and aligned with both the law and the public interest.

Sincerely,



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee on
Energy and Natural Resources



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator