
March 1, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to express our collective thoughts on Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, and Department of the Interior Secretarial Order 3395.

Section 208 of the Executive Order requires the Secretary of the Interior to “pause new oil and natural gas leases on public lands or in offshore waters pending completion of a comprehensive review and reconsideration of Federal oil and gas permitting and leasing practices.” It requires the Secretary to consult with the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Secretary of Energy while conducting this review.

We respectfully request that Western Governors also be consulted during the Secretary’s review. Western Governors’ Association (WGA) Policy Resolution 2021-01, *Strengthening the State-Federal Relationship*, describes Western Governors’ views on the importance of fostering a good faith partnership between states and the federal government, noting that it “will result in more efficient, economic, effective, and durable policy, benefiting the Governors’ and the federal government’s shared constituents and resulting in a nation that is stronger, more resilient, and more united.” Such a partnership, however, requires federal agencies to engage with states in “early, meaningful, substantive, and ongoing consultation in the development of federal policies that affect states,” as stated in the resolution.

We are eager to work with the Administration on policies that involve energy development and use in the West, while protecting the environment, wildlife, and natural resources, as expressed in WGA Policy Resolution 2018-04, *Energy in the West*. In the related *Energy Vision for the West*, WGA stated, “the increase in natural gas developed in the West, coupled with increased investment in renewable and alternative energy sources, have positioned the region and its Governors to play a central role in the nation’s economy and energy policy.” The resolution includes eight energy policy priorities that emphasize the importance of clean, affordable and reliable energy; environmental protection; energy security; and a balanced approach to the use of energy resources.

There is a robust energy sector in western states that is a valuable contributor to the economic vitality of many states and the energy security of our nation. Our states have taken a lead role in reducing the environmental effects of energy production activities while preserving this vital economic sector. We look forward to working with your Administration to ensure continued progress in enacting strict environmental standards, requiring accountability from energy developers, and working closely with the energy industry to develop cleaner energy solutions.

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The economic effects of energy production, including oil and gas leasing on public lands are substantial in many western states. Oil and gas and renewable energy production supports thousands of well-paying jobs and rural small businesses, many of which are already struggling from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on energy use. Energy production on public lands also generates federal royalties which are disbursed to various entities, including state and local governments. These payments are critical to some state and local budgets, including the funding of K-12 education and initiatives to improve conservation efforts and mitigate environmental impacts.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies that rely on federal land disproportionately affect western states, given the high percentage of federal lands in western states. We do not want to see a shift of jobs and energy activity to other states or nations that may not have enacted the strong environmental standards adopted by many western states.

Western states have a rich base of experience to inform the consideration of policies affecting energy development and the environmental safeguards needed to ensure the vitality of our citizens and landscapes. We look forward to working collaboratively and constructively with you to address the challenges our nation and our states face.

Sincerely,



Kate Brown
Governor of Oregon
Chair, WGA



Brad Little
Governor of Idaho
Vice Chair, WGA

Attachments