

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

March 29, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C St NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary,

An ongoing lack of communication and transparency is threatening the credibility of the Department you now lead. It is critical that the flow of information to the Congress and the public be improved as soon as possible.

The Democratic Staff of the Natural Resources Committee has learned that the Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs (OCLA), when in consultation with my staff, is not permitted to discuss hearings where administration witnesses will not be present. It is my hope that this is a miscommunication and I would appreciate clarification.

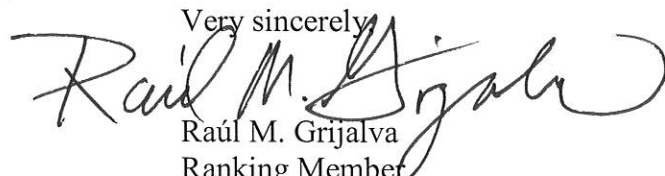
OCLA exists to keep Congress informed about the operations of the Interior Department and its agencies. This information often bears directly on issues raised in hearings before the House Natural Resources Committee. Refusing to answer questions about the Interior Department's laws and policies on the pretense that no administration witness will be present at a given hearing calls into question the office's very reason for existing.

This is particularly troubling in the wake of the Department's refusal to respond to any of the correspondence sent to Interior by Democratic Members of this Committee. Further, my repeated requests for an in-person meeting with you have been ignored since January.

Transparency is a core value of our democracy. This is the opposite of transparency. It speaks of a desire to limit the ability of Congress and the public to understand your Department's position on issues of great public interest.

Please acknowledge the responsibility you and your Department have as stewards of our nation's natural and cultural resources to provide open and effective communication with Congress and the American people.

Very sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources