

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

May 2, 2017

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

Dear Secretary Zinke,

On April 24, 2017, an article in *E&E News* reported that you had appointed a task force for abolishing regulations, consisting of five political “beachhead” employees and one career staffer, but no Senate-confirmed personnel and no one with clear technical expertise in land management, wildlife management, environmental protection, or safety regulation. While the task force is required under Executive Order 13777, there is no reference to this task force in your Secretarial Order implementing Executive Order 13783 (SO 3349), and no information provided about how this task force will operate, where it fits in the regulatory review process created by SO 3349, whether any of its activities or decisions will be transparent and be made known to the public, whether it will accept public comments, or any other logistical detail.

Federal regulations are promulgated through an open process that involves the public, multiple stakeholders, and numerous comment periods. The agency involved will identify a need for the regulation, conduct a thorough and transparent economic analysis—which is also open for public comment—and make informed decisions with detailed justifications. As with the standard regulatory process, this task force should not operate in the dark. The American people deserve to know why certain regulations are or are not being considered for repeal or modification, how decisions to repeal or modify regulations are being made, and the true health, safety, environmental, and economic impacts of making changes to those regulations.


In order to better understand this task force and how it will operate, please provide the following information to Mr. Vic Edgerton, Director of Investigations, House Natural Resources Committee Democratic Staff, by May 26, 2017:

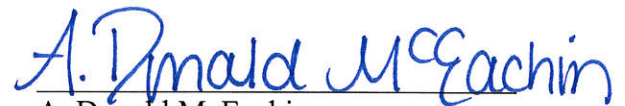
- 1) The names of each member of the task force and their qualifications for analyzing regulations related to land management, wildlife management, environmental protection, and safety;
- 2) How career staff with technical expertise in land management, wildlife management, environmental protection, and safety will be involved in the operations of the task force;
- 3) How the task force fits into the process laid out in Secretarial Order 3349;

- 4) The timeline for the regulatory task force to make decisions;
- 5) The criteria to be used by the task force to make decisions related to whether or not to modify or rescind existing regulations;
- 6) Whether there will be any public meetings of the task force and whether or not the task force will accept comments from the public; and
- 7) Whether any documents created by the task force are intended to be made public once the task force has completed its work.

Thank you for your attention to this request and for what I hope is a commitment to openness and transparency in government decision-making.

Sincerely,


Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources


A. Donald McEachin
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Subcommittee
on Oversight and Investigations

Cc: Mr. James Cason, Acting Deputy Secretary
Mr. Daniel Jorjani, Special Assistant to the Secretary